FEMININE IDENTITY AND CULTURAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE WORKS OF FOUR WOMEN AUTHORS: ROKEYA SAKHAWAT HOSSAIN, ATTIA HOSAIN, ARUNDHATI ROY AND JHUMPA LAHIRI

ABSTRACT
THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

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In

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BY

MOHAMMAD KAMRAN AHSAN

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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Women's marginalization is an old story. Women have been regarded as subservient to men since time immemorial. Even great thinkers and philosophers have regarded women as inferior to men. Aristotle, the great philosopher believed that femininity is an incomplete version of masculinity. He believed that a woman lacks qualities that are essential to men. He believed that women are defective by nature and incomplete in comparison to men. They are mentally and physically weaker than men and should passively allow men to dominate. Aristotle used biology to reinforce his claim. Aristotle opined that women are defective, because they cannot reproduce semen which contains a full human being. When a woman and man cohabit, the man supplies the substance of human being (the soul), whereas woman provides only the matter in the form of nourishment. Aristotle concluded that a woman is comparable to an infertile male.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, an early feminist writer of the Indian sub continent as well as the founding pillar of Bengali Muslim feminism was born in 1880 into an elite Muslim *zamindar* family of Pairabond (Rangpur). As far as the spelling of Rokeya's name is concerned, it is a distorted form of 'Roqyiah', as she herself used the correct spelling 'Roqyiah' in her letter to Khan Bahadur, while in her other letters she has used R.S. Hossain. This distortion namely 'Rokeya' shows early translation activity.

Rokeya's rancour towards patriarchal subordination and oppression, as reflected in her two utopias, is the outcome of her own familial situation and experiences in life. Though born into an elite family she was deprived of any schooling due to the orthodoxy prevalent in Muslim society.

Rokeya's search for feminine identity leads her to create a semi utopian world of Tarini Bhavan where patriarchy-stricken women seek refuge from the crushing juggernaut of patriarchy. In *Padamarag* (The Ruby), Rokeya presents a society for the upliftment of downtrodden women where women from different ethnicities, castes, and creeds band together by the common goal of fulfilling an educational and philanthropic purpose. These women have their common experiences with personal histories of patriarchal oppression. These women are the representatives of the victims of patriarchal tyranny that was prevalent in Rokeya's own society and still exists in the 21st century.

Sultana's Dream is treated as a radical text that sometimes denounces outdated religious interpretations. But *Padamarag* often provides testimony to Rokeya's religiosity. Her views regarding religion and nationalism preclude twenty-first century trends, especially in the context of Indian Muslim community, which is accused of having an anti-national outlook. Rokeya expounds that religion is not a bar in the espousal of nationalism. She also pontificates Muslim community to maintain the virtue of sincerity (*Ikhlas).* Rokeya's feminist ideas are fundamental to a wide range of cultures and communities. On the one hand, she expresses the plight of Indian women through the characters of Sultana, Siddika and other sisters of Tarini Bhavan. She also gives expression to legal and societal oppression of white women in the form of Helen. Rokeya vehemently opposes the patriarchally defined behavioural patterns of wife, daughter, sister and mother. She propounds that woman and man can co-exist harmoniously.

Attia Hosain is an early Muslim novelist and short story writer. The

experiences reflected in her novel and short stories express her nostalgia for the past. They also express the sordid realities of women's marginalization, and feudal exploitations. Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* can be defined as an insider's view of everyday experiences of elite women. Along with individual experiences of the novelist, national history runs parallel to the narrative that impinges Muslim identity vis-a-vis Muslim women. A contextual reading is imperative in order to assess various aspects of the novel. At the inception of the novel, two institutions viz feudalism and patriarchy have a tenacious hold over society. *Ashiana* (the nest), the family house, is presented as a microcosm of society that contains characters from every strata of contemporary society.

Though the realistic picture she draws of gender oppression and marginalization on the basis of class, is suggestive of Progressive influences. As far as her political thinking is concerned, she says that religion does not play any role in her political thinking. However she never shuns religion altogether, and espouses humanitarian aspects of religion.

Phoenix Fled in contrast to *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, is not autobiographical, rather it presents various facets of human life. Except for a few stories, the narrator is omniscient third person and sheds light on the lives of characters cutting across the lines of religion, class and gender. Attia Hosain minutely probes the human psyche. The stories deal with the characters from both urban and rural underprivileged classes. The characters posit their eccentricities. They are fatalistic and hold their fate (kismet) responsible for their predicament. The concept of sharam (modesty) and izzat (honour) is deeply rooted in them.

Suzanna Arundhati Roy is the first home grown Indian who was awarded the Booker Prize for her debut novel *The God of Small Things*. Along with the patriarchy and casteism, Roy discusses hybridity as a major issue in Indian patriarchal social structure. Estha and Rahel suffer a long misery for their hybrid roots. Ammu's inter-religious marriage becomes the albatross round the neck for the twins. The twins are marginalized and neglected for their hybrid roots. But the double standard of hybridity is applied to Sophie Mol's superior status in Ayemenem house. Sophie Mol is also an offspring of inter-caste marriage, but the inmates of Ayemenem House welcome her. The same precept of Manu is applied in the case of Sophie Mol, as she is the daughter of Chacko, who gets married to Margaret Kochamma, a British lady. Estha, a seven year old child is well aware of his status in the family, he is aware of the fact that being the off springs of an inter-religious marriage, the twins are at the periphery and have no claim for the equal treatment. From the beginning of the novel, at the burial of Sophie Mol, Ammu and her twins are depicted as alienated figures. Their alienation, depicted in the first chapter, foreshadows their plight in the course of event. This alienation is not limited to the twins; Sophie Mol also becomes the victim of her hybrid roots in death. She is buried in a child-sized coffin, detached from rest of the world. Roy denounces religion as a patriarchal construct and a tool wielded by the bourgeois to suppress the under privileged classes of society viz the untouchables and the women. Roy has projected a very dismal picture of the male psyche. It can go to any extent to obliterate a woman who does not conform to its values. She has presented a nexus between the patriarchy and

British colonialism and argues that the patriarchy in Kerala gets impetus from the colonizers as in ancient Kerala, women were in possession of the rights of inheritance and other privileges before the advent of Britishers. Jhumpa Lahiri's real name was Nilanjana Sudeshna. When she was enrolled in school, her teacher decided to call her Jhumpa, as it was easy to pronounce. Thus Jhumpa Lahiri became her proper name. In *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa applies various perspectives of narration, viz male, female as well as children perspective of narration whereas in *The Namesake* she presents only the male point of view. In 2008, another collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* was published. Jhumpa once again exposes the diasporic communities, trying to root themselves into the unaccustomed earth. Immigrant experiences of the characters are similar to those of the characters of her earlier works.

As Jhumpa's writings deal with diasporic experiences, definition and scope of diaspora should be elucidated. The term 'Diaspora' is originally derived from the Greek word '*diaspirein*' that means to disperse. The term diaspora was applied to the dispersal of the Jews from their homeland. In twenty-first century the range of the term has been increased to assimilate other displaced population on account of colonial expansion, slavery or migration in search of livelihood. Jhumpa beautifully carves out the dilemma of immigrants and presents their dilemma as their maladies. The characters suffer this dilemma, their predicaments are different. Apart from culture, Lahiri successfully presents human psyche and various themes related to it, like themes of marriage, love, fidelity and feminist issues. Apart from cultural displacement, and identity crisis, Lahiri presents

existential traits in her characters. Moushumi, Gogol in *The Namesake*, and Kaushik in *Unaccustomed Earth*, embody perfect existential characteristics. They search for their identity in a Godless universe, and their actions and lives are not governed by any outward agency. The characters behave as if they are thrown into an incongruous universe, and they are bewildered by the pulls and pressures of their lives.

The four women authors depict the dilemma of belonging. Feminist approach regarding women's marginalization, in cultural terms is similar. Rokeya, Attia, and Arundhati show economic and educational marginalization of women and present the nexus of patriarchy and colonialism, feudalism, as well as capitalism. Jhumpa goes further and presents the divided psyche of women torn between two cultures. She suggests that expatriates have created a third space.

These women authors have delineated a variety of woman. Ranging from Sultana of Rokeya Sakhawat Hosain's *Sultana's Dream* to Hema of Jhumpa Lahiri's *Hema and Kaushik*, these women represent the evolution of womankind. Each author, in her own unique fashion, has attempted to present solutions to women's problems.

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This is to certify that Mr. Mohammad Kamran Ahsan has completed his thesis entitled "Feminine Identity and Cultural Displacement in the works of Four Women Authors: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Attia Hosain, Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri" under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge this is his original work.

Seemin Hasan

(Dr. Seemin Hasan)

Supervisor

CONTENTS

Dedicated to

All Marginalized and oppressed Women

In silence they rise, in silence they set;
Who keeps track, who keeps an account?

Thomas Gray

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

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Mohammad Kamran Ahsan

(Mohammad Kamran Ahsan)

Chapter- One

Introduction

Women's marginalization is an old story. Women have been regarded as subservient to men since time immemorial. Even great thinkers and philosophers have regarded women as inferior to men. Aristotle, the great philosopher believed that femininity is an incomplete version of masculinity. He believed that a woman lacks qualities that are essential to men. He believed that women are defective by nature and incomplete in comparison to men. They are mentally and physically weaker than men and should passively allow men to dominate. Aristotle used biology to reinforce his claim. Aristotle opined that women are defective, because they cannot reproduce semen which contains a full human being. When a woman and man cohabit, the man supplies the substance of human being (the soul), whereas woman provides only the matter in the form of nourishment. Aristotle concluded that a woman is comparable to an infertile male.

Freud, the well known psychoanalyst was also prejudiced against women as he postulated the notion of 'Penis–Envy' in order to define female sexuality. According to Freudian psychoanalysis, 'Penis–Envy' is a theorized reaction of a girl during the course of her psychoanalytic development. The little girl recognizes the distinction between male and female gender when she notices visible penis of her male counterparts. This deficiency instills in her a penis envy as she considers male gender superior. Rousseau defined male-female niche as well as education on the basis of his prejudiced view of female nature. He held the view that a man should be strong and active whereas a woman should be weak and passive. Fidelity, modesty, and devotion are the key attributes that Rousseau

sought in a perfect woman. As far as women's education is concerned, Rousseau expressed the view that women's education must be planned in relation to men. The educational ideals of Rousseau promoted ideology that moulds women into a patriarchal niche. He postulated the roles of women in the following terms: "To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend to him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all times, and this is what she should be taught while she is young." [1]

This gender bias was not limited to theoretical level, rather in every realm of society women were treated as subaltern to men. Women's place in family, the basic institution of society, was secondary and marginalized. Traditional family institutions set a niche for men as head of the family whereas women were destined to play secondary roles of house-keeping and child rearing. In Greek and Roman cultures the head of the family (i.e. male) was entitled to authority and allowed to dominate over the women of the family. Similar authority was installed in the form of *Pater Familia* (the father) in Roman family institution. In Indian context the same authority of *Karta* (the head of the family) has been taken for granted. Thus the patriarchal marginalization of women started from family or private sphere and pervaded the public sphere. The ideal women were embodiment of traits that adhered to family responsibilities. Certain submissive and slavish tendencies were defined as essential features of womanhood. The defiance of this patriarchal niche would result in opprobrium and public disgrace for women. Hence, women were confined to the domestic spaces and forced to

adhere to duties as docile mothers, sisters and wives. The patriarchal notion of cultural preservation also exacerbated the condition of women. Moral and spiritual sanctity of society was measured in relation to the female body. A regressive patriarchal bias is found in the notion of 'femininity' that is a "set of socially constructed characteristics applied to women. Among these characteristics are nurturing, emotional, irrational, subjective, passivity, dependency, other."[2]

The assertion of male dominance found expression in the code of moral conduct incurred upon women whereas men's wantonness was considered as an expression of masculinity. With the passage of time, women's marginalization took various forms such as commodification of women for sexual, reproductive and entertainment purposes. In order to "aggrandize their aggressive phallic selves"[3] men wielded female biology as a basis of women's incarceration to domestic space. Women's incarceration was justified in the name of women's vulnerability to moral degradation.

Since women writers dealt with themes of marginalization and domestic incarceration, their works were reckoned perfunctory and below the rank of literary merit. Women writers were expected to write in decent language, and the suitable role that the patriarchy ordained was of the writers of children's literature. Women's writings are often the outcome of the rich oral tradition of storytelling. The oral tradition was replete with myths, legends, songs, and fables. Initially, women's writings were the written version of oral tradition. Poetry and drama emerged as the initial written forms. The novel came out at a later stage.

A brief introduction to feminism is vital in order to interpret the texts of the four women authors. However, Rokeya's writings cannot be assessed as the outcome of western feminist discourse. Rokeya's writings were far ahead of her western counterparts as the first wave feminism "focused on the needs of middle-class educated women"[4] and Rokeya's feminist concerns encompass women from every strata of society.

The word "Feminism" is originally derived from French and it is applied to the women's movement in the nineteenth century. French dramatist Alexender Dumas first used this term in 1872 in a pamphlet *L' Hommefemme* to indicate women's movement for their rights. Feminism is a movement which desires to obtain socio-economic, moral, religious, political, educational and legal parity for women. Literary feminism is not an outcome of twentieth century women's movements. Its roots can be traced to the works of Sappho and to Aristophanes' play *Lysistrata* in ancient Greece. Aristophanes depicted women as physically and intellectually superior to men. Chaucer's depiction of the wife of Bath also has feminist implications as she "values experience over authority and was more than a match for each of her five husbands."[5] Christin de Pisan, in the Middle Ages, challenged the authority of male critics of her age. In Renaissance and seventeenth century, women emerged as pioneers in the literary arena. Mary Wollstonecraft advocated the enlightenment of French Revolution for women. In the nineteenth century many women writers emerged in both Europe and America. The Bronte sisters, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Margaret Fuller and Emily Dickinson are the prominent women writers of the

nineteenth century. Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Hilda Dolittle, Gertrude Stein are some modernist women writers.[6] Despite a long list of women writers, women were subservient to men and they were deprived of education as well as financial liberty.

Early twentieth century feminist criticism encapsulates a variety of feminist issues such as re-writing of literary history in order to incorporate hitherto neglected contributions of women, the exploration of a female literary tradition, theories of sexuality and gender on the basis of psychoanalysis and Marxism as well as gender roles in both male literature and criticism. Twentieth century feminism also questioned various literary genres that perpetuated male dominance, for instance, the epic glorifies masculine traits and heroism whereas the lyric is sometimes emotional and feminine. The First Wave Feminists did not call themselves "feminists". The term "feminist" was used in the late 1960s, with the emergence of second wave feminism. The Second Wave Feminism was influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in the US whereas in the UK it was impinged by the labour right movement. It was sometimes referred to as the "women's movement."

Mary Wollstonecraft has a significant place in the history of feminism. Her polemical work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)* presents a fit reply to Rousseau's views regarding women. Wollstonecraft claims that by omitting women, the goals of liberty, equality and fraternity will not be fulfilled. Wollstonecraft refutes the age old patriarchal assumptions that women are governed by emotions and do not have rational faculty. Virginia Woolf is also an

important figure in the history of feminist criticism. Her feminist concern encapsulated the issue of men dominated language, and women's writings in the context of social and economic status. Woolf advocates economic independence for women in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas.* She revolted against the conventional gender norms that marginalise women in public and private spheres of society. *A Room of One's Own* contains two lectures; Woolf delivered on "Women and Fiction". The title of the book presents a metaphor of women's space and intellectual liberation. Woolf asserts, "A woman must have money and a room of her own, if she is to write fiction."[7] Woolf advocates economic and psychological liberation for women in order to use their natural flair in the field of writing. In an analogy, Woolf compares fiction to a spider's web as a web can not be spun without any support structure; similarly literature also needs "grossly material things."[8] Woolf is of the view that the economic deprivation of women is their intellectual impoverishment. She associates intellectual freedom for women with their financial freedom.

Simon de Beauvoir, who is an eminent feminist prior to the second wave feminism, is famous for her radical text *The Second Sex (1949).* She has an ideological proximity with Jean Paul Sartre, an existentialist philosopher. Simon de Beauvoir presents patriarchal concept of "masculine" and "feminine". Masculinity is considered as the "absolute human type"[9] and man "is assumed to represent humanity in general"[10] whereas women are considered as merely negative objects. In the second wave feminism, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique (1963)* dealt with the lives of middle class US women. "The mental and

emotional state of educated middle class housewives tied to home and domesticity"[11] was the concern of Betty Freidan's book. The second wave feminism was criticized for its focus on heterosexual, middle class and white women, ignoring the issues of Black women, working class women and lesbians. Attia Hosain's feminist concern encapsulates both upper class women and women of lower and middle strata of society. Similarly in Rokeya Sakhawat Hosain's writings "class race had little importance and sisterhood was only one motivating force."[12]

From 1970, feminism changed into diverse facets and various theories of feminism emerged e.g. Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Marxist Feminism, Third-World Feminism, and Eco-Feminism.

Liberal Feminism is also called "Moderate Feminism". Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor Mill, and John Stuart Mill, the eighteenth century writers are considered as liberal feminists. Reason and rationality are the key attributes of liberal feminism. This is a movement that strives for amelioration of women by providing them equal opportunities in socio-political arena in patriarchal society. Liberal feminists believe that the liberal democracy has a capability to end gender oppression if women are allowed to participate in the social, political, and economic structure of society. Liberal feminists do not uphold that new political, economic and social categories should be structured in order to end gender oppression; rather women's full enfranchisement into every arena of society will eliminate gender segregation.

Radical Feminism is another school that emerged out of the women's

liberation movement of the 1960s. Radical Feminists in contrast to Liberal Feminists, uphold the construction of new political, economic and social categories to end the patriarchal oppression of women. Radical Feminism propagates that the cause of women's oppression is biological and institutions of marriage and family are created in order to subordinate women's status. Radical Feminism also hits hard at the "institutionalized heterosexuality"[13] and views it as the root of patriarchal control of women. Radical Feminism holds the patriarchy responsible for the oppression of women. According to Radical Feminists in a patriarchal system male domination exists and thus a male culture is developed. Radical feminists want women's culture in place of patriarchal culture. Shulamith Firestone in her book *The Dialectic of Sex (1970)* argued that "women's reproductive and nurturative role is the cause of their oppression and that technology that will end women's need to be reproductive vessels and new social structures are needed to free women."[14] Mary Daly, a white US feminist theologian in her book *Gyn/Ecology: The Meta ethics of Radical Feminism (1978)* propounded the construction of a new language, "a gynomorphic language"[15] in order to displace the language of patriarchy as the patriarchy perpetuated itself through language. Cultural radical feminists glorified womanhood and emphasized that feminine characteristics should be celebrated.

The third school of feminism is Marxist Feminism that views gender oppression as a product of class oppression. Marxist Feminists postulate that the elimination of capitalism is "the means for ending women's oppression."[16] Moreover sexual division of labour under capitalism consolidates women's

marginalization. Women's labour is confined to domestic space whereas man's labour encompasses every realm of society. Women's underpayment for their work as well as their household duties that are unpaid, are highlighted in Marxist Feminism.

Third World Feminism questions the notion of female identity and subjectivity under colonial domination. Moreover patriarchal imperialism and sexual/ racial imperialistic practices in literature and other socio-political and economic arena are also debated in Third World Feminism. It is impinged by Edward Said's *Orientalism* and post colonial discourse. Third World Feminism highlights the nexus of patriarchy and imperialism. It underscores the sense of "otherness" in patriarchal-imperialistic practice to the colonized subjects, particularly to women. Chandra Talpade Mohanty is an important figure in Third World Feminism. Her essay *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse (1991)* critiques western feminism for "making a monolith of Third World Women."[17] The lives, experiences and writings of Third World women are colonized by western feminism, as the needs and cultural differences of Third World women are neglected by western feminism.

French feminist philosopher Francoise d' Eaubonne first used the term Eco-feminism in her book *La Feminisme ou la mort (1976).* D'Eaubonne stressed on a balanced relationship with the environment and the end of patriarchy. Population growth and degradation of the environment is closely linked with the patriarchal view of women as merely reproductive bodies. Rosemary Reuther in her book *New Women/ New Earth (1975)* associated women's liberation with that of

"radical reshaping" of human treatment of nature. Some eco-feminists highlight women's stronger physical, emotional and spiritual ties to nature and assert that women ethically interact with the environment in comparison to their male counterparts.

Indian literature in English consists of two types of writings. The first category comprises English writings by Englishmen about their experiences of Indian subjects, and the second category presents Indian literature in English written by the native Indians. The literature written in English either by Indians or Englishmen was called as 'Anglo-Indian' literature. Many scholars like E.F. Oaten, Professor P. Sheshadri, Dr. Bhupal Singh and George Sampson included both categories in Anglo-Indian writings.[18] The term 'Indo-Anglian' was used for the first time in 1883 to describe "a volume printed in Calcutta containing 'Specimen Compositions from Native Students'."[19] K.N.M. Iyengar later used it in 1943, as the title of his first book. Hence, the later term 'Indo-Anglian' hints at the demarcation of the English writings by white and non-white writers. Indian literature in English has been targeted by some Western as well as Indian critics. It was said that since English is a foreign language for Indians, it cannot express genuine feelings and emotions. W.B. Yeats holds the view that "No man can think or write with music or vigour except in his mother tongue."[20] Similarly Indian critics, Iqbal Singh, M.Chalapathi Rau disparage Indian writings in English. Kailasapathy and Anantha Murthy remark: "English with most Indians is still a language of official public affairs, of intellectual and academic debates. They do not use English for their most intimate purposes to think, and feel, bless and curse,

quarrel and kiss."[21] But the artistic excellence of Indian writers in English like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Santha Ramarau, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy and several other writers have silenced the critics of Indian English literature.

Toru Dutt was the first Indian woman who wrote in English. She presents archetypal and mythical images of Indian womanhood through the characters of Sita and Savitri. Toru Dutt's women are steeped in Indian tradition of self sacrifice and devotion. Henry Derozio, a male writer, vividly portrayed the denigrated and ghastly conditions of women owing to the inhuman tradition of *Suttee* in his long narrative poem *The Fakir of Jungheera* (1882). The poem narrates the story of a young high caste widow Nuleeni, who is rescued by her ex-lover, a fakir from the funeral pyre. The poem presents a woman oppressed by asphyxiating traditions.

Raja Rao projects fundamental and archetypal images of woman in his novels. By presenting archetypal images, he espouses woman's role as a preserver and protector of home, and culture. In his novel, *The Serpent and the Rope*, he gives an idealized description of woman.

> Woman is the earth, air, ether, sound; woman is the microcosm of the mind, the articulation of space, the knowing in knowledge; the woman is fire, movement, clear and rapid as the mountain stream; the woman is that which seeks against that which is sought. To Mitra, she is Varuna, to Indra, she is Agni, to Rama, she is Sita, to Krishna, she is Radha. Woman is the meaning of the word, the breath, touch, acts; woman that reminds man of that which he is and reminds herself through him of that which she is. Woman is kingdom, solitude, time, woman is growth, woman is death; for it is through woman that one is born; woman rules, for it is she, the Universe.[22]

Despite idealization and glorification of womanhood, several women

writers dealt with the stark reality of women's marginalization. These women writers revolted against the idea of maternity, a niche particularly emphasized by the patriarchy. They attempted to define parental responsibility. Male sexual vagrancy was criticized by the women writers as a rejoinder to the negative image of infidel women.

Aru Dutt, Toru Dutt, and Sarojini Naidu were pioneers of English poetry by Indian women. In the pre-independence era, there were some other women poets like Themis, Savita Devi, Nilima Devi, Lotika Ghose and Elsa Kazi who exhibited their talents in the field of Indian English poetry. Leela Dharamraj, Kamala Das, Monika Verma, Margaret Chatterjee, Tapati Mookerji, Tillotma Rajan, Suniti Namjoshi, Sujatha Bala Subramaniam, Mary Erlukar, and Gauri Deshpande wrote with a sense of individualism and feminist concern in the post-independence era. Apart from poetry, Indian fiction in English was also produced by women writers. Toru Dutt wrote French and a English novels. Both her novels *Bianca, or the Young Spanish Maiden* and Le *Journal de Mademoisele d' Arvers* were autobiographical projections. Due to her early death, Toru Dutt could not complete *Bianca.* It appeared in *Bengal Magazine* in 1878. Raj Lakshami Debi's *The Hindu Wife, or The Enchanted Fruit (1876)* and Krupabai Sattianandhan's *Kamala, A Story Of Hindu Life(1894),*and *Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) are worthy of mention as women writings in Indian English fiction. Cornelia Sorabji, a writer of short stories dealt with the marginalization of women. She presented the themes of domestic incarceration of women in her collection *Love and Life behind the Purdah (1901).* The same theme of *purdah*

culture is also dealt with by Iqbalunnisa Hussain in her *Purdah and Polygamy: Life in an Indian Muslim Household.*[23]

In the post-independence era, women writers were impinged by the feminist movement. They questioned the patriarchal authority over the literary arena. With the expansion in popularity of English language in the post-independence era, more and more women writers opted for English as a mode to register their protest against the andocentric practices. Literature, written by women, presents themes of alienation, deprivation, and women's quest for identity. The themes of the novels and poetry also express social and economic exploitation of women. Women characters are shown vociferously resisting the patriarchal practices. In contrast to mythical feminine figures of Sita and Savitri who present sacrificing and suffering images of women, the feminine characters do not capitulate to patriarchal authority. With the advent of various facets of feminism, different aspects of feminism are visible in the works of modern women writers.

After the Second World War, "many women novelists of quality"[24] contributed to Indian fiction in English. Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Santha Ramarau, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai are the prominent figures in Indian English fiction. Santha Ramarau contributed to English fiction with her two novels, *Remember the House (1956),* and *The Adventuress (1970).* Her first novel exposes the existential predicament of the narrator-protagonist through her experiences of cultural shock. *The Adventuress* is an autobiographical novel which presents the theme of East-West encounter. The female protagonists,

Indira in *Remember the House* and Kay in *The Adventuress* are portrayed as effective, realistic and individualistic in comparison to the male characters. Kamala Markandaya in *Nectar in a Sieve (1954)* discusses the adverse impacts of industrialization and modern technology on the rural life. *Some Inner Fury* also presents a "tragedy engineered by politics."[25] *A Silence of Desire* focuses on common themes of science against superstition, religion versus materialism and East- West encounter. In *A Handful of Rice*, Kamala Markandaya discusses the predicament of lower middle class people, living on the poverty line.

The novel sheds light on the problems of unemployment, mass migration from villages to cities in search of better prospects of sustenance, corruption, class-consciousness between upper and lower strata of society and the capitalist exploitation of poor. In *The Coffers Dams,* Kamala Markandaya expresses her concern for the impacts of industrialization on the natural landscape. Tribal life is devastated by ruthless industrialization. *The Nowhere Man* presents the rootlessness of migrants in the alien culture of the host country. The novel portrays the rampant racism of England in the sixties. The protagonist is burnt alive by his racist neighbour.

Nayantara Sahgal has political roots and her novels deal with the Indian political situation. She is the niece of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and her writings bear the imprint of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. Having been brought up with Eastern values and Western education, Sahgal presents East-West encounter. Her first novel A *Time to be Happy* exemplifies the alienation of a western educated Indian in his native land. Her next novel *This Time of Morning also*

presents the dilemma of identity. Indian literature written by women in post-colonial era, mainly discusses the issues of female identity. Exploration of female subjectivity in order to create feminine identity free from the shackles of patriarchy is a recurring theme in modern Indian fiction by women. The women writers have used the technique of Bildungsroman, to show the process of intellectual maturity of the female protagonist. Santha RamaRau's *Remember the House (1956),* Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961)*, Ruth Pravar Jhabvala's *To Whom She Will (1955),* Kamala Markandaya's *Two Virgins* (1973) can best present the Bildungsroman technique.

Among the post- independence women writers, some Muslim women also made significant contribution in Indian English writings. Attia Hosain, Zeenuth Futehally, Qurratul Ain Hyder, Suhaila Abdulali, Zahida Zaidi, Samina Ali, Shama Futehally are significant Muslim writers. Zeenuth Futehally's *Zohra (1951)* presents the plight of a woman caught in a marriage of convenience. Zohra is married to Bashir against her wishes and leads a life void of emotional fulfillment. Zohra is attracted to Hamid who reciprocates her feelings. Hamid courts her and enjoys her company. When things begin to get serious, he withdraws quoting morality as an excuse. Futehally's contribution lies in highlighting the subversive corruption of upper class society. Hamid did not consider morality when he started his affair. Eventually Hamid leaves Hyderabad. In a tragic ending, Zohra volunatirly nurses the victims of plague and eventually contracts the disease. Visalakshi Menon says "Though mildly feminist, this novel does not have the anger and defiance that fired the imaginations of other Muslim women writers of

this period such as Ismat Chugtai, Rasheed Jahan and Atia Hosain, though some of the concerns are common."[26]

Shama Futehally is another modern writer who discusses the "challenges of urbanization, corruption, generation gap, communalism after the partition, the joint family system and the nuptial storms in life." [27] In her first novel *Tara Lane* (1993), Shama Futehally presents the themes of patriarchal exploitation along with the problems of India as an emerging nation. The novel deals with the ups and downs in the life of a Muslim family. Tara's character develops in the end as "a self assertive woman of India"[28], who casts off her image of docile daughter and submissive wife. Shama Futehally's second novel *Reaching Bombay Central (2002)* presents "her troubled feelings about the increasing intolerance and communalism."[29]

The novel does not focus on any feminist issue; rather it presents the writer's feelings of insecurity and vulnerability due to the growing communal divide. She wrote another book *In the Dark of the Heart: Songs of Meera* which is widely acclaimed. Shama Futehally also translated the works of some famous Urdu poets like Ghalib, Sahir Ludhianvi, and Siraj Aurangabadi. Suhaila Abdulali's first novel *The Mad Woman of Jagore*, presents her eco-feministic concerns. She also sheds light on the plight of lower class women as well as unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources in a capitalist system.

The present thesis studies the works of four women authors Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Attia Hosain, Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri. Their works

deal with the themes of cultural displacement and feminine identity. On the issues of cultural displacement and cultural conflict many male authors like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, V.S. Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry, Nirad Chaudhary have contributed to the literary arena. Similarly some female authors like Bharati Mukherjee, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal are appreciated by the critics for their presentation of the complexities of migration. Before assessing the works of four women authors, it is imperative to define cultural displacement and feminine identity. Cultural displacement in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri takes place due to the migratory experiences of the characters as her works present the lives of second and third generation immigrants. The cultural displacement in the works of the other three authors is for different reasons.

Culture, in the view of Welsh cultural theorist Raymond Williams is "an individual habit of mind; the state of intellectual development of a whole society; the arts; and the whole way of life of a group or people."[30] The fourth definition is used in order to understand cultural displacement of migrants in an alien culture, whereas the second definition of culture "the state of intellectual development of a whole society" is applied in order to interpret cultural displacement of oppressed women living in India or abroad. Women are culturally displaced as their intellectual development is curbed and their individual habit of mind is colonized by the local patriarchy in association with colonialism, feudalism and capitalism. In Rokeya's works it is the association of patriarchy with colonialism that renders women culturally displaced and without any identity. Attia's works display the association of feudalism with the patriarchy whereas Arundhati Roy's *The God of*

Small Things evinces the exploitation of nature and women. Feminine identity helps women to achieve liberation from patriarchy. Roles ordained by the patriarchy reduce women to a subaltern status. Women's quest is to cast aside patriarchal roles and gain freedom from the shackles of patriarchy.

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Chapter- Two

"God is neither blind nor deaf..."

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

Sultana's Dream
Padamarag

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, an early feminist writer of the Indian sub continent as well as "the founding pillar of Bengali Muslim feminism"[1] was born in 1880 into an elite Muslim *zamindar* family of Pairabond (Rangpur). As far as the spelling of Rokeya's name is concerned, it is a distorted form of 'Roqyiah', as she herself used the correct spelling 'Roqyiah' in her letter to Khan Bahadur, while in her other letters she has used R.S. Hossain. This distortion namely 'Rokeya' shows early translation activity. The name is written in the manner that the British pronounced it. Either it is an example of linguistic genocide by the British or the influence of the phonetic tendencies of Bengali speakers. Samuel Mathai describes the phonetic tendencies prevalent in East Bengal: "The East Bengalee is unable to differentiate between heard and hard, guerdon and garden, fir and far, because in his language he does not have the sound of 'e' in her."[2] Bengali speakers could not differentiate between sounds of 'k' and 'q'. Thus 'Roqyiah' is pronounced as Rokeya.

Rokeya's rancour towards patriarchal subordination and oppression, as reflected in her two utopias, is the outcome of her own familial situation and experiences in life. Though born into an elite family she was deprived of any schooling due to the orthodoxy prevalent in Muslim society. Rokeya recollects her childhood memories of strict *purdah* system,

> From the age of five I had to observe purdah and had to conceal myself even from women. Men were, in any case, not allowed free entry into the *antahpur* (inner house). I was too young to understand what all the fuss was about, yet I would have to conceal myself and observe strict purdah.[3]

Rokeya encountered the religious orthodoxy of her father, Mohammad Abu Ali Saber, but got unstinting support of her siblings. Rokeya's elder brother's surreptitious nocturnal teaching made her proficient in English. She was barred from any formal education in her maidenhood because of the stringent purdah system. She was taught only Arabic in order to read the holy *Quran,* as was the custom in Muslim households. Rokeya learnt Bengali from her sister Karimunnnessa (to whom she dedicated the second volume of *Motichoor*). Karimunnessa, a young girl of excellent caliber, taught herself Bangla and also wrote poetry. However her talent had to be suppressed due to her early marriage.

The dichotomy between the male and female spheres as well as the aversion of Muslims towards female education in colonial Bengal is evident in the following lines:

> I never entered the precincts of a girl's school or college in my childhood. What little I have learnt was due to my elder brother's love and care for my education... other relatives taunted us, but neither my brother nor I paid any heed to this.[4]

Ibrahim Saber, her elder brother, studied at the elitist St. Xavier's College while Rokeya was deprived of education. He arranged Rokeya's marriage at the age of sixteen to Rai Bahadur Syed Sakhawat Hossain, about twenty-five years her senior. He was a deputy magistrate in Bhagalpur. In spite of the large gap in the ages of the couple, Rokeya's marital life was replete with conjugal bliss because of the generous as well as supportive temperament of her husband. He was literati of Rokeya's writings as well as an enthusiastic admirer of Rokeya's efforts for the promotion of female education. Sakhawat Hossain bequeathed ten thousand rupees

for setting up a school for girls. During the life span of Syed Sakhawat Hossain, "Rokeya's literary output published in the Indian periodicals of the time brought her into limelight as a daring writer: Mrs. R .S Hossain."[5]

Rokeya's work was published 1901 onwards. *Indian Ladies Magazine*, co-edited by Sarojini Naidu in Madras, first published *Sultana's Dream* in 1905. Her first essay *Pipasha* (Thirst) appeared in *Nabaprabha* in 1901. Later on another essay *Jewellery or Badges of Slavery* was published in the journal *Mahila (translated Woman)* in 1903. Some of the essays written by her also appeared in *Nabanoor (translated the NewLight)*. Later these essays appeared in a compiled form of *Motichoor (Pearl Dust)*, vol-1-2 (1908-1921).

Rokeya experienced a number of tragic events in her life, including the death of her beloved niece and adopted daughter Nuri. These miseries are reflected in a letter written by her on 30th April 1931.

> In childhood, I was deprived of my father's love, while my married life was devoted to nursing my husband through illness. Everyday I checked his urine, prepared his food and wrote to his doctor. Twice I became a mother, but the joy of holding my babies to my breast was short lived. One left me at the age of five months; the other died when it was four months old. And for twenty years, I have been suffering the torments of widowhood. So, how can Nuri's death cause me shed more than my fair share of tears? [6]

Rokeya's marital life did not remain blissful very long due to her husband's diabetes, which finally resulted in his death. After the death of her husband, she had to face controversy with her stepdaughter and her husband. They evicted her from the house she shared with Rai Bahadur. Glimpses of Rokeya's own life can be found in the portrayal of Dina Tarini in *Padamarag*. Rokeya set up

a girls' school at Bhagalpur in 1909. However, she was forced to close it down when she moved. She established another school in 1910 in Calcutta. By 1932 the school had burgeoned so rapidly that it got the status of a higher secondary school.

Rokeya's own life contains identity crises created by contemporary social, religious as well as historical circumstances. In order to avoid the misconstruction and misinterpretation of her two feminist utopias, it is imperative to mention the contemporary social milieu. An isolated reading of her texts delinked from her contemporary background is likely to misguide the readers. Rokeya's perception of a woman's role in society was much ahead of her time. A forerunner of modern feminism, she worked hard not only to promote the education of women but also their social upliftment.

Rokeya was born in an orthodox family that permitted extremely circumscribed freedom for women. Stringent *purdah* obstructed Rokeya's formal education, as also did the belief that formal education would make the women self-willed and distract them from their 'natural' duties of child rearing and housekeeping. Lack of formal education proved a setback in her life, but her enthusiasm towards education gave her impetus to initiate female amelioration; the school established at Bahagalpur was the first step in this direction. Moreover Karimunnessa's failure due to her early marriage galvanized her "to an extent that spreading education among women and ensuring their individual rights became Rokeya's life long mission. Karimunnessa's failure became the pillar of Rokeya's success." [7]

Rokeya's contemporary society encountered the brunt of colonialism. The advent of British proved a boon as well as a bane for Indian society. On the one hand, colonialism dispossessed the indigenous people from their land as well as from their culture; it brought new systems of education, scientific learning and western philosophy. Directly as well as indirectly, the western concept of women's emancipation, stirred Indian intelligentsia to take necessary steps in this direction. Bengali *bhadralok* (gentlemen) proved more amicable towards British culture and education system in sharp contrast to Muslim society. Chagrin and odium existed towards British among Indian Muslims as a result of their dispossession. Before the advent of British, the Muslims ruled a major part of India. Muslims were eliminated from every field. They lagged far behind the other indigenous communities.

Though a number of reform movements and educational programmes were initiated at this juncture in both communities, the real motive of these reforms "was not to attack the prevalent patriarchal system in any way."[8]A convergence is found between the Indian patriarchy and British colonialists. The motive of British education system was only to prepare the collaborators of their rule. The motive as conspicuously stated in Macaulay's Minute itself was, "to form a class who may be interpreters between us and millions whom we govern...a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect."[9] Similar was the motive of Indian patriarchy "to prepare fit companions to men of the bourgeoisie who would serve the colonial system."[10]

That was why the model of Victorian woman was found suitable for Indian women with the addition of traditional qualities. Victorian women too were subjected to the patriarchal norms and were the victims of oppression as depicted in the character of Helen Horace in *Padamarag*. Women of Rokeya's contemporary society were being oppressed irrespective of caste or creed. They were denied equal education, and whatever education they were getting, the goals were, "limited and cautious."[11] The reformists, revivalists and the Victorian British unanimously upheld the female education "which would henceforth be an additional embellishment. Women would be civilized housewives"...[12] "to produce enlightened sons for them."[13]

Rokeya's contemporary society had notions that relegated women to the realm of household and seclusion. Female education was frowned upon by the patriarchy due to the prejudice that educated women were outspoken, irreligious, and irresponsible for their family, uncontrollable for their husbands and their education would lead to familial maladjustment and marital disharmony. Women were considered vulnerable and their going out of their houses to earn money was considered to be a matter of opprobrium for *Ashraf* (upper section of Muslim society).

Moreover women were considered to be more susceptible to the cultural as well as the utilitarian onslaught of British missionaries that "had severely attacked the Indian civilization, specifically on the issues of gender relations." [14]

Partha Chatterjee rightly points out the dichotomy of inner/outer domain for male and female that was propounded by the patriarchy.

> World is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents our inner spiritual self, our true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests [...] it is also typically the domain of male. The home in its essence must refrain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world—and woman is its representation. [15]

Patriarchy, in Rokeya's days coaxed women in their own peripheralization in the name of cultural conservation. But Gandhi's initiatives regarding female amelioration and exhortation towards Nationalist movement paved the way for women's self-realization of their capabilities. Self-realization of women's capabilities is the motif of Rokeya's two feminist utopias. Bharati Ray points out, "Gandhi's views were not informed by a feminist perspective, and they infused self-confidence into women. His assertion that women were morally better suited than men for non-violent struggle removed the stigma of their inferiority vis-a vis men." [16]

Thus the nationalist movement offered a space for women in the political and social arena. However the Muslim women remained on the fringe. Though many reform movements had been initiated in Muslim society, the attitude towards female education was hostile. A glimpse of this can be seen in the description of Shamsunnehar Mehmood, Rokeya's first biographer,

> Their father disapproved highly of Rokeya's learning English or Bengali. Brother and sister would wait for nightfall [...] then two would gather their books, and as darkness engulfed the world, a dim light would be lit in the youngsters rooms. By candle light the brother taught while the sister drank deep at the fountain of knowledge. [17]

Notwithstanding this hostile atmosphere for female education, some of the reformists were raising voices of dissent regarding the peripheralization of

women. The reformists published a number of journals for women in order to spread awareness regarding female education, polygamy, divorce, right of inheritance etc.

Rokeya's concern and efforts regarding female amelioration might have been the influence of these journals. Even these journals were not spared from the misogynistic jibes, for instance the first journal for women, *Akhbar-un–nisa* (women's newspaper) published from Delhi in 1887 and edited by Maulvi Syed Ahmad Dehlavi, was stopped owing to public opposition which gave it the contemptuous sobriquet of *Akhbaron ki Joru* (wife of newspaper).

Muslim backwardness was so intense that the great educational reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan didn't include female education in his educational programme for Muslim community.

We can gauge the problems that Rokeya encountered in her endeavours for female education, in such an insular society. Undoubtedly she must have derived the motivation from her predecessors of female education and upliftment like Nawab Faizunnessa, Azizunnessa Begum (1780-1850), Sikandra Begum (1819-1868), Shah Jahan Begum (1838-1901) and Sultan Jahan Begum (1858-1930). Apart from these, other women, like Toru Dutt (1856-1877) Krupabai Sattiandhan (1862-1894), Katherine Mayo (1862-1940) were among her non-Muslim predecessors. Moreover Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) and Sarala Devi Choudharani (1872-1945) were among her contemporaries who fought for women's causes in the political and literary arena. Mahatma Gandhi who in 1921

had, "added political salvation as a goal for women in nation building"[18] might have also inspired her.

Rokeya's writings have been labelled as blasphemous and considered an onslaught on Islam. Rokeya, however, grew up in a deeply religious family. The misconstruction of her texts as blasphemous and secular is due to her denouncement of religious bigotry as well as misogynistic version of Islam. Religion in Rokeya's contemporary society was manipulated by the patriarchy that deprived women of their religious rights. Mukti Lakhi describes her as "radically sacrilegious"[19] and posits an extract of her article *Amader Abanti (Our Degradation)* that was expunged by the publishers.

> Whenever a woman has tried to raise her head, she has been brought down to her knees on the grounds of religious impiety or scriptural taboo...what we could not accept as correct, we had to in the belief it had the authority of a religious dictum...Men have always propagated such religious texts as edicts of God to keep us women in the dark...the scriptures are nothing but a set of regulating systems prescribed by men. You hear that prescriptions opposite regulations ... we must not allow ourselves to bow down to the undue authority exercised by men in the name of religion. It has been seen time and time again that stricter the religious restrictions, the more severe is the women's victimization.[20]

Mukti Lakhi presents an analogy between Islamic prayers with that of marginalization of women.

> Women are "brought down to their knees," by religion, a significant choice of words because Islamic prayer is carried out on one's knees, which while symbolizing the act of prayer is also a symbol of submission and begging. For Rokeya, prayer in nationalist age is synonymous with degradation.[21]

Mukti Lakhi's conclusion is due to her overlooking Rokeya's life and her social and religious circumstances. Mahmoodul Hasan disabuses Rokeya from the attribute of "radically sacrilegious" and posits the element of "Islamic Feminism" in her writings. He also sheds the light on Rokeya's religiosity and her performing Islamic rituals.

> In Arab society, where women were being oppressed and female infanticide was widespread, Prophet Muhammad came to their rescue. He not only promulgated some percepts but also set an example how to treat women with respect. He showed how to love one's daughter by demonstrating his love to Fatima [his daughter]. The love and affection for one's daughter is rare on earth. Alas! It is because his absence among us that we [women] are in such a despicable plight! [22]

Rokeya rues the dearth of Islamic teachings among the Muslims of her society. Whenever she talks about the malpractices prevalent in Muslim society, she clouts the misogyny and chauvinism of the patriarchal version of Islam, not the egalitarian Islam that was introduced by Prophet Mohammad. She condemns the Muslims for their confinement to some rituals and exhorts them to shed their insularity regarding women. She conforms to the Islamic values and rituals and simultaneously fights against the discrepancies and disparities for women in Muslim society. Her essay *God gives, Man robes* disabuses her from the misconception of her religiosity. She clearly slams Muslim patriarchy for women's deprivation of their religious rights. In order to instill egalitarianism in her contemporary Muslim males, Rokeya takes recourse of Hadith (Prophetic Tradition). Rokeya vehemently demands an egalitarian outlook in men for their female counterparts, as it is the essential feature of Islamic jurisprudence. Rokeya creates awareness in the male psyche to bolster the western education in order to

sustain the changing circumstances of contemporary society. Her ideas are persuasive not only for the female amelioration but also for the upliftment of the community at large.

> Our great Prophet has said 'Talibul ilm farizatu ala kulli Muslimeeno-o-Muslimat' (i.e. it is the bounden duty of all Muslim males and females to acquire knowledge.) [...] Children born of well-educated mothers must necessarily be superior to Muslim children, who are born of illiterate and foolish mothers.[23]

Rokeya debunks a widely held opinion of non-Muslims that Islam has deprived women of their rights. Her works contain elements of Islamic Feminism.

Rokeya's discourse on *purdah* has also been shot down by the same prejudice i.e. isolated reading of her texts and she has been labelled 'anti purdah'. But her discourse on purdah is not against the Islamic percept of *hijab* that propounds a modest dress for women and morality for both the sexes. Only women are not subjected to purdah; men are instructed to avert their gazing and to maintain a moral and pious conduct. Rokeya herself admits: "I am not against purdah system itself."[24]

Rokeya condemns the asphyxiating restrictions for women, imposed by the patriarchy that proscribed access to the outside world for women. In order to fight against the discrepancies and socio economic disparities rampant in her society, Rokeya envisioned education as a panacea; she envisaged it as the foundation of social upliftment and advancement of women. Unlike the reformists, revivalists and Victorian British, Rokeya rejected gender based educational system, and espoused the vocational education for women in order to eliminate their

dependence on their opposite sex. She viewed the stereotypical misogynistic notion of women's lesser cerebral and physical capability as the root cause of women's peripheralization, deprivation as well as of economic disparities.

Unlike Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's views regarding female education, Rokeya espoused government interference in female education. Emphasis was laid on physical education since Rokeya "believed that it was important to make women physically stronger, fit and confident. Rokeya also recognized the importance of women's economic independence. Her curriculum therefore, included vocational training in crafts and sewing."[25]

Rokeya viewed the vocational training as an ancient tradition and espoused its implementation mandatory for the students: "The ancient tradition of vocational training (although this training must be given today under changed circumstances) must be revived by active propaganda."[26]

Rokeya's educational ideas, expounded almost more than a century ago still have relevance. Rokeya shunned the blind imitation of western customs and educational system. She approved of recasting western education to suit Indian needs:

> When we advocated the education of girls we generally imply the adoption of western methods and deals in their training to the exclusion of all that is Indian. [...] What we should avoid is its total neglect and a tendency to slavish imitation of western custom and tradition.[27]

Among her female amelioration activities was the foundation of Bengal branch of the *Anjuman-I –Khawatin-I –Islam* (Association of Muslim Women), under whose tutelage Rokeya along with other Muslim women was taking various

courses of action for women's social upliftment. Among these activities, prominent were the establishment of vocational training centers for the girls coming from the lower strata of society, and exhortation of Muslim educated women to educate their slum dwelling uneducated counterparts and the gearing up of income generating works in order to consolidate the financial condition of women so that they might be freed from the economic dependence on man.

As mentioned earlier, schools established at Bhagalpur and Calcutta represented the first step in female upliftment. To set up these schools, Rokeya had to suffer great pains. She was subjected to much public disgrace by her community. Her enthusiasm to establish the school is exposed in one of her letters: "For this girls' school and this school alone I left Bhagalpur. And it makes me unhappy when I see this school does not prosper as I wish."[28]

Rokeya's ideas regarding female amelioration and educational system are nationalistic in essence. She was closely acquainted with some British ladies of her husband's circle. However, she was not in the least inclined to trading culture and values. As far as her political involvement is concerned, she did not actively participate in political movements.

> To Rokeya, the politics of gender demanded greater attention than the politics of colonialism. To her, the battle against gender subjection was more crucial than that against colonial subjection; the former was far older and more deep rooted than the latter, although the latter appeared to be the key issue before her contemporaries. To eradicate the former was her life's ambition, and she fought her battle...Her books constitute her action, and in that sense she was a political activist.[29]

S. N. Amin describes Rokeya's endeavors in female amelioration in the following words.

> To her, Women's emancipation meant the establishment of equal rights for women in the educational, economic, political spheres. That alone would ensure a just society where men and women could work side by side in harmony, 'like the two wheels of carts.' [30]

Bharati Ray is also of the same opinion: "To men, she said: give women equality and recognize their contribution. To women her call was: 'wake up". [31]

Rokeya's search for feminine identity leads her to create a semi utopian world of Tarini Bhavan where patriarchy-stricken women seek refuge from the crushing juggernaut of patriarchy. In *Padamarag* (The Ruby), Rokeya presents a society for the upliftment of downtrodden women, "a community set in Bengal and founded and run by their own kind"[32] where women from different ethnicities, castes, and creeds "band together by the common goal of fulfilling an educational and philanthropic purpose"[33]. These women have their common experiences with personal histories of patriarchal oppression. These women are the representatives of the victims of patriarchal tyranny that was prevalent in Rokeya's own society and still exists in the 21st century. Mehmudul Hasan is of the view: "In Rokeya's colonial society of gender hierarchy, women are subject to discriminatory practices. They are marginalized, socially alienated and excluded from the culturally defined realm of masculine activities."[34]

Quest for home and cultural displacement are prominent elements in Rokeya's writings along with education and confinement. Sisters of Tarini Bhavan are the representatives of women, searching for their culture and for a secure place, which they may call their own. The homelessness of women in

Indian society irrespective of religion is evident in one of Rokeya's essays '*Griha' (The Home).*

> In this wide world, we have no place. Regardless of the state of our finances, we always live under someone's custody, always in the custodian's homes, not ours... When the reeds covering our fragile cottages wear thin (that is when we are poor)...when rain water leaks on our heads, even then we live in the houses of our custodians...If perchance, we are daughters or daughters-in-law of a king and live in a palace, we are still inmates of the homes of our lords and masters...Or as daughters or daughters-in-laws of an ordinary householder, wherever we are, we live under the domination of our masters...We women cannot claim even a humble cottage as our home. No living creatures are as helpless as we, because they all have a home.[35]

Through the presentation of "Society for the Upliftment of Downtrodden Women", Rokeya presents an altruistic vision of female amelioration and a home for impoverished, distressed women. The character of Dina Tarini, saviour of the distressed, is the reflection of Rokeya's own personality, since Rokeya opened Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School and thus paved the way for female education in Muslim Bengal for the first time.

Like *Sultana's Dream*, Rokeya finds education a panacea for women's plight, marginalisation and subordination. In order to give a vivid picture of female oppression at different levels and to spread cognizance towards the plight of women, Rokeya garners destitute, distressed and patriarchy –inflicted women. These women are from the different strata of society and thus represent women's oppression and victimization in their respective classes. Evidently, Nalini recites the lines from Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* to describe the marginalized status of women in the society.

In silence they rise, in silence they set;
Who keeps track, who keeps an account? (p.39)

The oppression of women as depicted in *Padamarag* can be traced at familial as well as societal level. All the time society and family are at odds with these women over patriarchally constructed notions of women's marginality and peripherlization. Dina Tarini, founder of the society herself faces societal as well as familial ostracism when she embarks on female amelioration activities. She is subjected to derogatory remarks for her endeavours to break the shackles of patriarchy. Derogatory remarks on Dina Tarini made by the members of her own sex are the evidence of patriarchal hegemony. The mother-in-law of Banu, one of the alumni of Tarini Bhavan blatantly calls Dina Tarini a whore. Despite her non-observance of seclusion, Dina Tarini is forced to live in seclusion by the patriarchy. "Having thus been virtually ostracized by her own relatives, Dina Tarini lived in seclusion."(p.28) Rokeya's portrayal of Dina Tarini is the embodiment of patience, philanthropy and altruism. Rokeya presents Dina Tarini as an emblem of religious harmony and social reform. She chides her Hindu counterparts for clinging to the superstitions as conspicuous in her conversation with Latif's mother. Rokeya criticizes Hindu women for their adherence to the superstition that jewellery is auspicious for their marital status.

However through the group of these marginalized and oppressed poor sisters of Tarini Bhavan, Rokeya points out that female experiences of male brutality are universal; women from different cultures present their miserable traumatic experiences of "marital despotism and familial oppression"[36], the root cause of their distressed condition is always patriarchy albeit sometimes women

themselves collaborate with patriarchal hegemony and become adversaries of their own sex. Along with twofold oppression that is familial and societal, these women are also the victims of legal and educational systems, constructed by patriarchy.

At the outset of the novel, a 'youngman' in English attire is seen. This young man is actually a miserable woman who has to disguise a male in order to protect herself in a hostile and misogynistic society. The portrayal of this camouflaged woman delineates Rokeya's contemporary social as well as religious situation that is hostile to women. This traveller wants to seek shelter in a mosque but at the entrance, 'he' did not dare to enter it. The mosque stands for patriarchal hegemony over religion; in a male dominated misogynistic society even religion does not offer any repose to distressed women.

With the progress of events, this distressed woman Siddika finds shelter in Tarini Bhavan where she gets a congenial and amicable atmosphere in sharp contrast to outside male dominated world that is hostile to women. But she remains introspective and reticent all the time, neither has she disclosed her identity nor her previous experiences in contrast to other sisters who have a zest for life and constantly interact with one another. On asking, where she comes from, she replies, "Please excuse me, I can't tell you a thing. I am all-alone in this world with not a soul to call my own. [...] I live everywhere. At Tarini Bhavan, in particular." (p.38)

In spite of her reticence and dissimulation, sisters of Tarini Bhavan commiserate her and give her affection. Siddika has a mistaken belief that all the

sisters of Tarini Bhavan are as happy as they seem to be ostensibly, as she says to Saudamini: "Could my heart be light as thine? I'd gladly change with thee." (p.70)

Saudamini smiles at her remarks and informs about her own miserable past: "You can not imagine how traumatized it is, sister!" (p.71)

Siddika comes to know that these poor sisters have undergone undesirable and unbearable traumatic experiences of patriarchal tyranny. Rokeya sheds light upon the mental and emotional trauma that women undergo due to the familial and societal hostility through the character of Saudamini. Rokeya disparages the misogynistic male notion of 'step motherhood'; Saudamini becomes the victim of this prejudice and a female relative of her husband's offspring also perpetuates this misogynistic patriarchal belief. Society plays a vital role in her sufferings.

Saudamini, herself a stepdaughter, suffers the pangs of this stereotypical notion. She gets married at the age of seventeen to a widower, with two offsprings. On the first day of her arrival to her in-laws house, she has to face the 'poisonous barbs' of the people who, ironically come to welcome the new bride. Through the comments of the people on Saudamini's stepmotherhood, Rokeya shows that misogynistic prejudices are deeply embedded in the society. Saudamini's childlessness is also termed as a curse upon her for her stepmotherhood. Her plight shows the patriarchal oppression of a woman both at the mental as well as the emotional level.

Shyama's character is an emblem of women's jealousy and women's collaboration with patriarchy in the suppression of their own sex. Shyama is the

maternal aunt of Saudamini's stepchildren. Shyama's ploys to harass Saudamini become successful as she presents Saudamini as a 'she-demon' in her neighbourhood; even she skews the minds of the young ones against her. Saudamini's plight reaches its zenith when her husband becomes averse towards her and takes all the allegations against her for granted. Society plays a vital role in her sufferings. The world has become an abode of demons, "a desert enveloped in darkness" (p.81); she finds no relief from her pain and suffers, "torments of hell on earth" (p.81). Consequently her trauma reaches to its highest pitch. In a state of bewilderment, fed up with continuous tortures and a chain of miserable circumstances, Saudamini loses her sanity and is admitted to a lunatic asylum. After one year she regains her sanity. In this misogynistic world she finds nobody to call her own, except Dina Tarini and other sisters. She finds no place to which she can belong except Tarini Bhavan where she finds her own identity. She now utilizes her skills for the amelioration of 'sisterhood'. Saudamini belongs to a *kulin Brahmin* family and her sufferings enunciate patriarchal oppression prevalent in *bhadralok* of *kulin Brahmins* (elite Brahmins). After coming to Tarini Bhavan, she regains her patience and works for feminist causes. In the sixteen years of her stay in Tarini Bhavan, her heart is now "big enough to embrace the whole world. It is no longer upset by minor setbacks. Nor does a little neglect or indifference affect it."(p.84)

The tragic story of Rafiya Begum highlights the suppression of women in the upper strata of Muslim society. Her plight is similar to that of Saudamini. Like her, Rafiya Begum belongs to a very distinguished family and marries an eminent

lawyer. Rafiya falls prey to her husband's infidelity. Her husband goes to England to qualify the bar, leaving her behind with two young daughters. Rafiya's husband passes ten years in England and meanwhile Rafiya dreams of blissful marital life with her husband, but just fifteen days before his return, Rafiya receives a registered letter from her husband containing divorce papers. After living through ten difficult years, she has to live with the stigma of divorce. Her husband returns from England with a white woman. The shock causes Rafiya to lose her sanity. She overcomes this trauma after three years and comes to Tarini Bhavan to seek refuge.

The tale of Helen's miseries shatters the simulacrum of white woman's superior status. Siddika's thought regarding white woman's blissful life is the representative of Indian female propensity: "She would also imagine that the English sisters suffered no anguish of their own. They were supremely happy." (p.91)

Helen's miseries, too, are rooted in man's infidelity. Having known and trusted Joseph Horace for three years Helen marries him. But after one blissful year, her miseries started. Horace is a drunkard who rages at her almost every night. Beating and abusing become everyday occurrences. Helen's maltreatment by her husband represents the brutality of men towards their female counterparts. This is a universal phenomenon irrespective of class, culture and region. Despite the continuous tortures, Helen remains faithful towards her husband who indulges in many nefarious activities like drinking and sexual perversions. Here Rokeya's "Reformist Project"[37] finds execution as she portrays Helen's husband Joseph

Horace, indulging in nefarious activities as this dissoluteness was rampant in British society. Helen's trauma goes to its highest pitch, when her husband turns out to be a lunatic and she becomes the victim of harsh and inhuman legal system of so called civilized England. Rokeya lays bare the reality of marginalized and subaltern status of women in the educated, civilized British society.

> Rokeya maintains that modes of oppression and methods of gender deprivation and discrimination may differ but the subordinate condition of women is the same in British and Indian societies.[38]

Familial and societal oppression of women is the motif of *Padamarag*; but the miseries of Helen Horace are one step further in the comparison of Indian counterparts, as she becomes the victim of legal oppression along with familial tyranny. Having undergone the torments and miseries, now Helen is purged of all the worldly pursuits. These torments have sublimated her love towards humanity. She has realized the meaning of cosmic love. The torments have become the source of her happiness because now she compares her sufferings with that of others and finds herself happier than others. Rokeya presents mysticism in the character of Helen Horace.

The tale of Sakina's plight once more underscores women's collaboration with patriarchy. She gets married to an up-and-coming lawyer, Gafur, who is forced by his elder brother to marry in order to reform his dissoluteness. During the wedding ritual involving the bride and the groom, Bela, the mistress of Sakina's husband, conspires against her. As a consequence, Gafur refuses to accept her as his wife. At the behest of his family Gafur finally proposes a truce to retrieve Sakina. But Sakina refuses to reconcile as she does not forget her

humiliation which seems to her "the humiliation of all womankind" (p.100) that she has undergone. At her determination, her own family fiercely opposes her decision, but she does not heed them and comes to Tarini Bhavan. Rokeya's portrayal of Sakina is atypical as she presents her as a resolute and dignified woman who would rather stay alone than live with a heartless person.

Akin to the sufferings of Saudamini are the torments of Koresha Bi. Koresha Bi also undergoes mental and emotional trauma, caused by the death of her stepson. The patriarchal prejudice against "stepmotherhood" victimizes Koresha Bi. Her in-laws play a vital role in her victimization and misguide her husband complaining incessantly about Koresha Bi's negligence and indifference towards her ailing stepson resulting in his death. Continuous indifference of her husband compels her to leave the house and she comes to Tarini Bhavan with the same goal viz searching for her identity in a hostile world.

Usha bears the brunt of her husband's cowardice. One night a band of dacoits enter her room; her husband flees through a window, leaving her behind in the clutches of robbers. The robbers rob the house of all the valuables and finally they drag Usha with them over the forest path. On the way some volunteers of the congress committee rescue her. Now Usha becomes the victim of patriarchal emphasis on chastity. She is no longer considered virtuous as she has passed a night with strangers. Female members of her family become her adversaries in order to maintain the pseudo-dignity of a *Brahmin* family. The attitude of her family becomes so hostile towards her that she contemplates suicide. However, her servant Keshta's mother dissuades her from taking the

extreme step. Things get sordid as Keshta's mother sells Usha off to a prostitute. Keshta's wife rescues Usha from the clutches of her mother-in-law. Clandestinely, Usha accompanies Keshta and his wife to Calcutta, where Keshta's mother-in-law finds a job for Usha in Tarini School.

Siddika, the protagonist herself becomes the victim of twofold oppression that is colonial subjugation and the collaboration of patriarchy with it. She is betrothed to Latif. Haji Habib Alam, Latif's greedy uncle, desires more and more property. Latif completes his studies and Haji Habib Alam wants to cash Latif's education as an inducement "for fathers burdened with the responsibility of marrying off nubile daughters."(p.62) Among his distant relations, Saleha is the only offspring of a widow who is supposed to inherit a fortune. Haji Habib Alam covets her property and desires Latif's marriage to her. Latif himself is a hurdle in the plan. He does not agree to get married. So Haji Habib Alam makes an evil plan. He writes to Suleiman, Siddika's elder brother, to hand over Siddika's inheritance before the marriage; and threatens to repudiate Siddika as the bride for his nephew if he is not obeyed. Suleiman also replies that Siddika will be bequeathed her property at the age of eighteen. Haji Habib Alam also desires that no communication between Latif and Suleiman should take place. So he forges Latif's signature to acquire registered letters that come from Suleiman to Latif. Latif is forced by his female family members to give in. The female members of Latif's family represent woman's collaboration with the patriarchy. That is a recurrent phenomenon in Indian society.

By presenting Saleha's sour temprament, Rokeya explains that men are not always the root cause of marital disharmony. Sometimes the arrogance and the misbehaviour of women become detrimental for a successful conjugal life.

Robinson, the colonial indigo planter, is the emblem of colonial subjugation with the collaboration of patriarchy. Robinson wants to take possession of Suleiman's land in order to cultivate indigo, but having failed to fulfill his motive, Robinson kills Suleiman along with his nineteen years old son and frames and implicates Siddika. Rokeya skillfully portrays a sordid picture of bureaucracy who in spite of being Indian collaborates with the British to frame an innocent woman. Her disgust against aristocracy that allies with British imperialism is disclosed in *Padamarag*; her poem *Appeal* reveals her unhappiness and distrust.

Siddika (Zaynab) is hassled by the ploys of Robinson and wants to immolate herself. Rokeya presents a historical incident of *Neel Bidroh* (Indigo rebellion) that was led by Bengali farmers in order to counter colonial imposition of Indigo cultivation on the indigenous land. Rokeya's nationalistic agenda and anti-colonial feelings find expression as she glorifies the martyrs of *neel bidroh* through the character of Suleiman. Rokeya also instills religious learning in her contemporary womenfolk who are distressed and utterly obsessed by patriarchal tyranny and preaches to them to value their lives. She mobilizes them to realize their potential and to fight against patriarchy in a concerted manner. Echoing *Sultana's Dream*, Rokeya implicates the male sex and clouts the male's proclivity towards vices. "Is there any crime that gentlemen don't commit? Robbery,

embezzelement, theft, the deadly sins...is there a vice for which they don't have a licence?" (p.36)

In sharp contrast to outside male dominated world, Tarini Bhavan is described as "an ideal haven from the ravages of this cruel life" (p.39) whereas the sisters of Tarini Bhavan are presented as "daughters of sages and ascetics."(p.39)

Rokeya's vision of communal harmony also finds expression as conspicuous in the Preface where she gives a vivacious description of religion.

> Religion is like a three-storied mansion. On the ground floor are many rooms –for Hindus and their many castes, like Brahmins and Shudras; for Muslims and their various sects like Shias, Sunnis, Hanafis, Sufis and others; so also for Christians –Roman Catholics, Protestants and so on. On the first floor, you will see Muslims –all Muslims –or Hindus –all Hindus and so on. Then go up to the second floor and you will see just one room with no divisons. That is, there are no Muslims, Hindus, or anything else of the kind. Just humanbeings. And the object of their devotion is one God. If one starts a detailed analysis, nothing remains: everything becomes null and void; only God remains. (p.19)

Rokeya's views compliment history as the nation was in turmoil due to the communal riots and ethnic as well as linguistic conflicts.

Rokeya's views regarding female education are in sharp contrast to the patriarchal ideology which viewed female education as a channel to produce fit companions for men, whereas Rokeya's endeavours of female education are to produce womenfolk who are free from patriarchal shackles: "The girls were encouraged to grow up into good daughters, housewives and mothers inspired by high ideals, and to love their country and their religion more than life itself."(p.31)

The syllabus taught in Tarini School does not adhere to Macaulay's concept which aimed to produce compliant and mentally enslaved Indians. Instead special emphasis is laid on the ethical, religious, and moral education along with the Science, Literature, Geography, Astronomy, History, and, Mathematics. By producing womenfolk who are "self reliant and not lifeless puppets, burdens on their fathers, brothers, husbands or sons", Rokeya attempts to fuse nationalism and religion.

Sultana's Dream is treated as a radical text that sometimes denounces outdated religious interpretations. But *Padamarag* often provides testimony to Rokeya's religiosity. Her views regarding religion and nationalism preclude twenty-first century trends, especially in the context of Indian Muslim community, which is accused of having an anti-national outlook. Rokeya expounds that religion is not a bar in the espousal of nationalism. She also pontificates Muslim community to maintain the virtue of sincerity *(Ikhlas):* "Several Muslim women offered donations anonymously. Such philanthropy was practiced in secret for fear that the divine grace earned by the act would be lost if the identity of the donors became common knowledge." (p.31)

By implementing a uniform for sisters of Tarini Bhavan, Rokeya tries to establish equality and sisterhood among the female sex irrespective of caste, creed and class. These women are free from "the badges of slavery" represented by embellishments and jewellery. Married women, in the sub continent, are bound by custom to clothe themselves in bright colours, wear jewellery, particularly glass bangles, nose studs, and anklets. They also have to adorn themselves with colour

e.g. henna on hands and feet among Muslims and *sindoor* and *alta* among Hindus. Widows in both communities dress either in white or pale shades and are not allowed to use jewellery or colour. Rokeya exhorts women to discard the jewellery, imposed by the patriarchy in order to liberate them. In her essay *Jewellery, The Badges of Slavery,* Rokeya blatantly lays bare the primitive male tendency to tame the women by tying them with jewellery: "Handcuffs for prisoners are made of steel; ours made of gold and silver and we call them bangles. Perhaps in imitation of dog collars we have fashioned our neckbands."[39]

Rokeya presents an analogy between masculinity and femininity; in Hindu mythology, Ganga, a feminine figure, is fetishistic for its purity, like Ganga, Tarini Bhavan, a feminist place has the potential to purify everything desecrated. In Islamic concept, Satan, a masculine figure, is supposed to be the root of all evils.

Rokeya comments upon the unjust law of inheritance in Muslim society. Latif's father dies during his own father's lifetime. So he and his sisters are disinherited from the paternal property. Latif's mother and his sisters have to be looked after by his uncle Haji Habib Alam who inherits all the property. Rokeya slams the misogynistic practice since she herself had undergone the misery of disinheritance after her husband's death. By presenting the endeavours of Latif's mother for his education, Rokeya posits a traditional belief that behind every successful man is a woman.

Padamarag is a scathing indictment of hypocrisy in the name of *purdah* system prevalent in Muslim society. Banu one of the alumni of Tarini Bhavan, is not allowed to participate in the prize distribution of Tarini Bhavan by her mother-

in-law because *purdah* is not observed in Tarini Bhavan. Sakina and Rafiya, two sisters of Tarini Bhavan criticize Banu's in laws. Rokeya upholds the modest dress code in defiance of 'net blouses and saris that are as diaphanous as air' to maintain the morality in Muslim society. Rokeya lays bare the misogynistic male notion of women's susceptibility towards moral degradation. Men consider themselves moral custodians of women and believe they can cope with difficult circumstances in better ways in comparison to women who easily lapse into immorality: "You do not know about women being compared to earthen pots, since clay vessels are polluted very quickly." (p.141)

In contrast to this male prejudice, Siddika's character is presented as morally superior to men. She forgives Robinson only on moral and humanitarian grounds, akin to the lady warriors of *Sultana's Dream*, Siddika does not retaliate in the same aggressive vein. The colonial tyrannical attitude is personified in Robinson. Rokeya exposes the hypocrisy of British justification of Indian colonization. British claimed that colonization was needed to correct the uncivilized views of Indians regarding women. Another example is of Helen Horace, a British lady who becomes the victim of uncivilized laws of England: "What great injustice or oppression could one possibly think of? This England – this noxious, putrid England –claims to be civilized!" (p.96)

Continuous familial and legal oppression of women, compel Helen and Sakina to reject the institution of marriage in a male dominated society. They view marriage as an oppressive contrivance wielded by the patriarchy to subjugate

women in order to perpetuate vested interests of men: "I too advise you, dear Padamarag, not to marry. There's a danger there."(p.92)

Converse to the civilized British male, is the character of Latif, an educated, broadminded person, free from patriarchal prejudices towards women. But he offers the niche of a wife for Siddika, defined by the patriarchy. He desires to make his life blissful, so he covertly tries to damage Siddika's resolve to be a self reliant, educated, self sufficient new woman who is free from the fetters of patriarchy.

Rokeya posits two sides of feminism in chapter twenty six. Continuous torturing experiences of patriarchy created in Siddika an aversion to marriage. She has resolved to lead the life of an ascetic in the pursuit of female upliftment and amelioration. Siddika admits: "The heart has its limit; it can not expand."(p.173). Submerged in miseries, she can not nurture any attraction for Latif and earlier love towards him now has been transformed into merely affection.

Her long speech, "I wish to prove to society that married life alone is not a woman's ultimate quest; a housewife's responsibilities do not constitute life's essential duties. In other words, I hope, this sacrifice of mine will in future contribute to the welfare of women" (p.176) is a bold assertion of a new woman who is at odds with the patriarchally defined mode for women. Rokeya's formulation was a bold move, in an era when the only duty of women was to 'suckle fools and chronicle small bears.'

> Rokeya, almost alone, dared to say that marriage was not the ultimate goal, family was not the ultimate end. From here it was only one step to argue that girls might choose

> not to marry at all or marry the man of their choice even across community lines. Rokeya did not spell out any approval of marriage outside the community, and indeed seems not to have approved of it. [40]

Dina Tarini, an experienced lady, presents another aspect. She exposes the reality of patriarchal attitude towards an unmarried or widowed daughter or sister. She persuades Siddika to get married. Rokeya seems to be ambivalent towards the institution of marriage. On the one hand Siddika, Helen, and Sakina shun the institution of marriage and consider it to be a repressive strategy of the patriarchy to tyrannize women. Dina Tarini and other sisters uphold the institution of marriage and consider it indispensable for women. Finally they too, submit and bolster Siddika's determination.

> It is precisely this kind of sacrifice that is necessary for the future welfare of womankind. The more valuable the desired object, the greater should be the sacrifice associated with it! Of course, God is neither blind nor deaf--- the kind of life Sakina has lived or the way Siddika is sacrificing hers will never be in vain. Mother India! Who says that you are a poor beggar? When you have such gems for daughters, in what way are you impoverished? (pp.176, 177)

As mentioned earlier, Rokeya's own familial and social circumstances played a vital role in her feminist utopias. *Sultana's Dream* may be interpreted as her search for feminine identity in a hostile, male dominated patriarchal world that is averse to any change in the condition of women, which may challenge its hegemony. Rokeya wields literature as a tool to break the shackles of patriarchy as well as to participate in the world outside *zenana* (inner quarters of home for women).

Sultana's Dream is a subversion of the prevalent patriarchal system whose whole endeavour is to confiscate the social, political as well as religious rights from women in order to "aggrandize their aggressive phallic selves"[41] and to construct a social set up where women would either assume a male identity or be subjugated. Either way their own identity would be completely annihilated. Female characters, in Rokeya's works, are the victims of double folded oppression viz patriarchal subjugation and colonial oppression. Cultural displacement, in *Sultana's Dream* takes place in the mind. The 'suitable' mindset of virtuous girls as defined by the patriarchy included characteristics like obedience, sacrifice, selflessness and voicelessness. It is abandoned and replaced by individuality and the spirit of inquiry. In the conservative patriarchal arrangements, this resulted in the displacement of gender roles and relations. Culture, in the words of Raymond Wiliams, is "an individual habit of mind; the state of intellectual development of a whole society; the arts; and the whole way of life of a group or people."[42] In the perspective of the second definition, cultural displacement may be interpreted as the state of intellectual development thwarted by some oppressive agencies. Thus this approach is applicable to *Sultana's Dream* since the protagonist Sultana is an emblem of Indian womanhood whose intellectual development is hindered by the colonizers with the collaboration of local patriarchy: "Colonial account of the human psyche often equated European with male, civilized and rational on the one hand non-Europeans as effeminate, primitive and mad on the other."[43]

Colonial chauvinistic approach is akin to the local patriarchal notion of women's lesser cerebral capabilities. *Sultana's Dream* is an onslaught on this patriarchal prejudice. In order to fight the disparities prevailing in the social set up, to find their own identity and to achieve their culture, that is, the state of intellectual development, Rokeya exhorts women to transcend their capabilities. *Sultana's Dream* is written with the emphasis on utilizing women's cerebral capabilities. It is a polemical attack upon the distorted form of Islamic *purdah* system, since patriarchy had distorted the egalitarian ideas of Islam and established a patriarchal version. *Sultana's Dream* has been described as Rokeya's rebellion against Islamic *purdah* System but Bharati Ray debunks this misconception regarding Rokeya's views on purdah.

> Rokeya attacked *abarodh* mercilessly, but in some of her writings and speeches, she made a concession for purdah and distinguished it from *abarodh*. Her approach was pragmatic, and she needed to formulate a workable solution by rejecting the worst form of suppression, but accommodating what could not be done away with. Hence, in her article entitled 'Burqa', she stated that the custom was acceptable so far as modesty of women was concerned; but to the extreme use of the purdah she was totally opposed.[44]

Due to the strident social condition of Rokeya's contemporary society, women's total emancipation was impossible, so Rokeya adopted the utopian mode of writing in order to protest against chauvinistic and misogynistic social practices. As far as patriarchal notion of modernity is concerned, Rokeya embarked on a middle way of the "alternative feminist modernity"[45] in *Sultana's Dream*; since in the Indian cultural context, modernity introduced by the British, was frowned upon by the patriarchy and it was supposed to be detrimental to as well as an

onslaught on the indigenous cultural roots of which women were the representatives. By positing "alternative feminist modernity", Rokeya also challenged the western hegemony over modernization and tried to prove that the western modernity was not "universally applicable"[46] due to the cultural specificities. In Indian context, people adhered to their culture and did not conform to the western discourse of modernity. This is the case of Rokeya herself, since her roots were deeply embedded in the Bengali as well as Islamic culture. She presented alternative modernity in defiance of western discourse of modernity. In alternative modernity, the individual is free from the hegemony of the western culture, and to be modern does not mean to be westernized and contemptuous towards one's own culture as was the phenomenon due to the brunt of colonialism. The colonizers, in order to modernize the colonised, imbued them with the contempt towards their own culture.

Thus *Sultana's Dream* is an invocation for those women who were culturally displaced by patriarchy and colonialism and were in search of new identities. Ladyland, the nation presented in the novella is a place free of both pressures and its women do not depend on men for their identities. It presents a land where patriarchal social system is inverted and "the lost matriarchal society is regained."[47]

Rokeya's portrayal of Sultana is the echo of her own feminist voice, as well as the representation of Indian womanhood that is marginalized and suppressed by the patriarchy. Sister Sara is the emblem of women's emancipation and liberty.

At the inception of the story, Sultana is dozing in her armchair. The chair symbolizes the typical condition of the Indian woman, tethered to the household.

Her sleep is the symbol of ignorance. Night is the metaphor of darkness that pervades Indian womanhood; conversely 'morning' is the symbol of emancipation and enlightenment. Sultana's nervousness, when she comes to know that her guide is not Sister Sara but a stranger, shows the sense of insecurity and timidity among the women of Rokeya's society. Sultana feels nervous and insecure in the company of a stranger, albeit she is a woman. In order to come out of her seclusion, Rokeya resorts to the dream mode. She castigates society that is hostile to women in the name of religious malpractices. Rokeya inverts male hegemony and disapproves the age-old chauvinistic belief of women's lesser cerebral capabilities. In order to falsify this chauvinistic notion, Rokeya posits the society of Ladyland where men use "brawn rather than brain"[48] and women exert themselves to use their full intellectual potential. By presenting the society of Ladyland, Rokeya exhorts women to use their mental skills. Simultaneously she exhorts the men folk to liberate women from domestic incarceration. Moreover, Rokeya protests against the self-assigned rights of patriarchy that are constructed to oppress women and to relegate them to the domestic sphere. In this Ladyland, women are entitled to all the political and social rights that were confiscated from them: "In India man is lord and master. He has taken to himself all powers and privileges and shut up the women in the zenana." (p.5)

In her radical approach, Rokeya charges the male sex of complicity and lack of control in accosting women and putting them into seclusion: "You need not be afraid of coming across a man here. This is Ladyland free from sins and harm. Virtue herself reigns here." (p.4)

Rokeya shatters the hegemonic male notion of the female being inferior. Simultaneously she imbues women with self-confidence for their physical capabilities. By giving the metaphor of "frog in a well" (p.6), Rokeya scolds women who are unaware of the liberty and emancipation: "You have neglected the duty you owe to yourselves and you have lost your natural rights by shutting your eyes to your own interests." (p.5)

Rokeya conducts the diagnosis of women's marginalisation by incarcerating men in *mardana,* the inner section of home, like *zenana.* In Ladyland, women enjoy emancipation and utilize inherent skills for the amelioration of society and nation; the skills that have been hitherto neglected. Women use their potential in every field of life, that is, politics, military, economy, education and science. Rokeya insists upon women's cerebral capabilities rather than physical strength; by using their acumen, women are able to compete with men, not only compete with rather they have become dominant over man. Rokeya finds that women's economic dependence along with the lack of education is the root of women's enslavement and subordination, so she stipulates women's equal access to education in order to eliminate gender disparity rampant in her society.

A dichotomy between the Queen of Ladyland and her counterpart, the King of a neighbouring country clearly hints at the dichotomy between the thought patterns of women and men. The Queen of Ladyland is philanthropic. She jeopardizes the defence of her country for the sake of refugees. The King is an emblem of man's aggressive nature. He assaults Ladyland only to maintain his

pseudo dignity. The Queen of Ladyland is kind. Mukti Lakhi contrasts Rokeya's feminism with that of western feminism: "Unlike western feminism's stress on individualism, Rokeya's feminism is communal; when Ladyland is invaded, the queen insists on dying with her citizens." [49]

In Ladyland the male and female technology is dichotomized. Female technology is nature friendly, "non lethal"[50] and "based on solar energy"[51] whereas male technology is destructive.

> Rokeya's women also fight in the battlefield; but they do not use conventional weaponry that can cause indescribable disasters and human fatalities. The female warriors of Ladyland use "rays of the concentrated sunlight" to drive away the enemy.[52]

Rokeya is extremely far sighted in her approach regarding the scientific progress. She envisioned the mobilization of natural resources much before they were actually practiced. Rokeya's philanthropic and humanitarian attitude is so wide that she envisioned the peace of world in disarmament and annihilation of weapons long before the present age where nuclear weapons have become a menace to the humanity. In Ladyland women use their talents for positive, peaceful exercises unlike men who use their physical and cerebral potential to produce weapons for the destruction of humanity itself. Rokeya's views on women's participation in warfare are in accordance with Islamic *jihad* that is necessary only in the unavoidable conditions; women of Ladyland participate in the warfare only when the situation becomes crucial and unavoidable.

Women participation in warfare serves as a point to Rokeya's exhortation of men to permit women equal access to the social sphere so that they may

participate in the nationalist movement. Women's bloodless and non-violent participation in warfare hints at Rokeya's ideological proximity to Gandhi; as mentioned earlier, according to Gandhi, "women were morally better suited than men for non-violent struggle."[53]

Rokeya proves radical in her approach to men's stereotypical derogatory notion of women's lesser cerebral capabilities. Men of Ladyland are detrimental to women's achievement and dismiss them as "a sentimental nightmare". Rokeya disparages the ostentation and hypocrisy of men folk regarding their commitment to work: "They dawdle away their time in smoking. Some smoke two or three cheroots during the office time. Talk much about their work, but do little." (pp.6-7)

Rokeya inverts an age-old stereotypical notion regarding women's capabilities of work. A gender stereotype prevails in India that women talk much and do little. She scolds the men folk for their dereliction of duty and at the same time exhorts them to realize their responsibilities towards humanity as well as the nation. Here Rokeya's approach is realistic and she envisions betterment of the nation in optimum utilization of physical as well as cerebral capabilities irrespective of gender.

Rokeya espouses change in the condition of Indian women by positing Sultana's journey as symbolic of movement from a hostile social order to one that is favourable. In the real world when Sultana is static, she is tethered to the patriarchal social system and does not have her own identity. Simultaneously she is culturally displaced since the state of her intellectual development is thwarted

by the patriarchy. The journey brings a change in her mental condition. Hitherto she was physically as well as mentally enslaved. In her dream she is outside her home and is physically liberated, but a paucity of mental liberty is notable in her. She is still confined to her mental seclusion since she feels awkward during her visit with Sister Sara and clings to the age-old patriarchal belief of female inferiority. But her encounter in Ladyland where women have clearly defined identity and are not bound to cultural roles defined by the patriarchy, leads her to self-realization as well as mental liberty. It suggests that only physical liberation from the domestic incarceration is not enough for women's amelioration but also sound education is needed for shaping their mental liberty. Without enlightenment women's emancipation is meaningless. Rokeya finds "two special impediments to the education of Muslim women."[54] On the one hand is seclusion (abarodh), and on the other the custom of early marriage. "In Rokeya's dreamland, Ladyland, education was spread far and wide among women. Early marriage had been stopped."[55] Rokeya suggests that education is the only solution to counter the cultural degeneration and materialism to which women are subjected; she simultaneously condemns the colonizer's lust for land and money. Indian patriarchy is an agency of colonizers who colonizes its women and imposes culturally defined roles upon them. Rokeya preaches to women to shun material pursuits and vehemently advises them to pursue knowledge. Her agenda of gender segregated educational system finds expression in the story: "But the seclusion is the same" she said, "in a few years we had separate universities, where no men were admitted." (p.8)

Rokeya seems to be inspired by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's ideology which she applies to women. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan is the founder of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. He believed that education is a panacea to all social evils. In Ladyland, jealously is transformed into competition, an essential feature for upliftment: "When the other universities came to know of this, they became exceedingly jealous and tried to do something more extraordinary still." (p.8)

Description of women's participation in war is a parallel of women's participation in the freedom struggle of India. Rokeya's nationalistic views can also be seen in her poem *Appeal.* She castigates the men for their desperation to win titles and for their submission to colonial rule.

> Some enjoy vast estates most
> And some weighty titles boast
> O'let us all gather round
> And appeal to the exalted crown-
> Better the pain of death by far
> But many times we vouch
> But ' titles' alas, we can not live without
> Some British paper has decreed
> Cut the titles, off with the tales
> Of the stupefied 'bhadro'males of Bengal
> That is why they deserve, no doubt.[56]

Unlike "*bhadro* males of Bengal" who give in to the British Empire in order to maintain their pseudo-dignity and pompous honour, the women of Lady land refuse material gain at the cost of dignity, honour and humanity.

> We do not covet other people's land, we do not fight for a piece of diamond though it may be a thousand-fold brighter than the koh-i-noor, nor do we grudge a ruler in his Peacock Throne. (p.14)

Rokeya is a pioneer feminist writer of colonial Bengal much ahead of her time. She shares universal vision of patriarchy and emerges as an iconoclast who is at odds with patriarchal subordination. Rokeya's endeavours are not restricted to theory. Practically she did a lot to liberate women from marginalization and oppression. In *Sultana's Dream*, she rejects the existence of man but in *Padamarag* her maturity and farsighted vision find expression as she presents that man and woman can co-exist harmoniously. As a third world feminist, Rokeya locates indigenous cultural roots in order to counter colonial feminist discourse. Rokeya strives for the assimilation of local cultural heritage fused with new ideas of the west. She lays bare western ostentation of female liberation in the form of Helen Horace, and glorifies ancient Indian and pristine Islamic civilization for their broad outlook regarding the women: "She was interested in western feminist ideas and aspirations but skeptical and critical of the limitations and obstacles to women's true equality in the west".[57]

Rokeya is much concerned with the liberation as well as social and economic parity for women. Her discourse on dress cannot be construed as anti Islamic as she herself observed Muslim dress code throughout her life. Her feminism is a riposte to those who take it as a cultural onslaught of the west. Rokeya's feminist discourse encompasses not only the Muslim women but also obsessed and patriarchy-ridden women of other communities. She disproves the mythical notion of women's lesser cerebral capabilities by taking recourse of prophetic traditions (hadiths) and exhorts the Muslim men to liberate women and assign them the rights that are given by Islam. Rokeya's concern of female education is based on her vision of economic independence of women. Once

women become independent, prevalent socio-economic and educational disparities will be decomposed automatically. In order to make women self reliant, Rokeya espouses vocational training and income generating activities. The sisters of Tarini Bhavan have expertise in income generating activities and thus are free from the fetters of patriarchy. These sisters of Tarini Bhavan use their hitherto neglected talents for women's causes as well as for serving the nation and community. As far as Rokeya's vision of women's liberation is concerned, she considers that by just releasing the women from domestic responsibilities does not mean that women are liberated. Mehmudul Hasan points out,

> Rokeya does not exclusively relate women's emancipation to their freedom from domestic condition [...] She hints at the fact that by just living outside seclusion women do not become liberated. True liberation comes when they make the best of their private and public spheres; and this will happen only when women earn a strong sense of belonging in both the worlds.[58]

Sultana's Dream is sometimes interpreted as Rokeya's discourse against *purdah* and she is considered as a secular writer, opposing Islamic preaching, but a close study of the contemporary society and her own life along with her other writings, debunks this belief and presents Rokeya as a devout Muslim woman. Whatever she has opposed in Islam, it is patriarchal interpretation and not the egalitarian Islam propounded by Holy Prophet.

> Rokeya was a feminist critique on two fronts. She threw her almost audacious challenge at the two pillars of patriarchy---the institution of the family and religion in their existing form [...] Nor did she condemn religion; she protested against its misconstruction and misuse.[59]

Her essay *God gives, Man robes* and *Educational Ideals for Indian Girl* show Islamic and Nationalist influences. She claims that the colonial educational

set up has a nexus with patriarchy. The concerns of both are to create womenfolk who regard self-assigned rights of patriarchy as sacrosanct. In defiance of colonial and patriarchal educational set up, she insists upon vocational education and vehemently opposes gender-based education.

To sum up Rokeya's feminist ideas are fundamental to a wide range of cultures and communities. On the one hand, she expresses the plight of Indian women through the characters of Sultana, Siddika and other sisters of Tarini Bhavan. She also gives expression to legal and societal oppression of white women in the form of Helen. Rokeya vehemently opposes the patriarchally defined behavioural patterns of wife, daughter, sister and mother. She propounds that woman and man can co-exist harmoniously. Critics misconstrue *Padamarag* as Rokeya's demand for the "dissolution of the institution of family"[60] but, in truth, Rokeya's endeavour is to define man-woman relationship on the basis of equality.

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Chapter-Three

'Responsibilities in this changing world'

Attia Hosain

Sunlight on a Broken Column
Phoenix Fled

Attia Hosain is an early Muslim novelist and short story writer. The experiences reflected in her novel and short stories express her nostalgia for the past. They also express the sordid realities of women's marginalization, and feudal exploitations. Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* can be defined as an insider's view of everyday experiences of elite women. Along with individual experiences of the novelist, national history runs parallel to the narrative that impinges Muslim identity vis-a-vis Muslim women. A contextual reading is imperative in order to assess various aspects of the novel. At the inception of the novel, two institutions viz feudalism and patriarchy have a tenacious hold over society. *Ashiana* (the nest), the family house, is presented as a microcosm of society that contains characters from every strata of contemporary society. Jasbir Jain maintains:

> Ashiana in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* serves as a microcosm of the world at large with not only its womenfolk in purdah but its retinue of servants who represent the community at large. It has a living relationship with the past not merely through the culture it cultivates but also through the house at Hasanpur at the outskirts of the city, which symbolizes continuity and permanence.[1]

Because of the autobiographical aspect of the novel, there are many convergences between Attia Hosain and her fictional narrator, Laila. Laila's observation of socio-political events of mid-twentieth century and their ramifications on her own life, her family and her community are extensions of Attia Hosain's own experiences. The world of Laila is a reflection of Attia Hosain's contemporary society. Akin to her narrator, Attia Hosain was born

in 1913 in Oudh (United Provinces of colonial India). Her father Shahid Hosain Kidwai was a *taluqdar* of Gadia (District Barabanki) in United Provinces and like other *taluqdars* of his age was educated at Cambridge. Her mother Nisar belonged to an elite Kakori family that consisted of intellectuals and "people of learning"[2]. Her mother's personality as well as her class made her conscious of high culture of Lucknow. Through the social circle of her father and her English education, she attained true secular values. She was educated at La-Martiniere School and Isabella Thouborne College for Girls. Her father died when she was eleven. After her father's death her mother had a confined life. Describing the impact of *purdah* culture in her household, Attia says that she was not allowed by her mother to join the university. However she had the privilege to be the first graduate woman among the *taluqdars*. Attia Hosain describes the *purdah* culture in her family:

> We were not in purdah in the sense that we were wearing burqas when we went out but we had a confined kind of life. People who came to visit us in the house were the sons of friends or relations but that was it because my remarkable mother herself never went anywhere. [3]

Attia Hosain was fascinated by the nationalist movements of her age. In Attia's literary and political activities, two streams of thoughts (i.e. leftist and Congress) had great influence. Attia Hosain was highly influenced by Sarojini Naidu and attended the All India Women's Conference. It is noteworthy that Attia had a close proximity with the prominent Marxists of

her age and attended the Progressive Writers' Conference held at Lucknow. Mahmuduzzafar, his wife Rashida Jan, Sajjad Zaheer, Mulk Raj Anand the noted communists were among the acquaintance of Attia Hosain. Her nationalist thinking is attributed to her location in Lucknow, as it was the hub of literary, cultural and political activities. Jill Didur points out that publication of *Angare* (translated coal or embers), a collection of short stories written by Ahmad Ali, Rashid Jahan, Mahmuduzzafar in Lucknow in1932, impinged Attia's literary activities.[4] *Angare* was denounced by the Muslim clerics as an onslaught on the morals. The clerics staunchly opposed the book and the authors, consequently the government proscribed the book on the grounds of public outrage. Attia's radical approach against the pseudo morality and strict gender segregations in the novel seems to be influenced by the Progressive Writers. But she denies the leftist influence on her writings; rather she admits that the leftists influenced her political thinking.

> No [I was] totally influenced by the west, I think in a way but completely my own cultural backgrounds and patterns of thought [...] They didn't influence me at all in my writing. They merely influenced me in my thinking politically. [5]

Though the realistic picture she draws of gender oppression and marginalization on the basis of class, is suggestive of Progressive influences. As far as her political thinking is concerned, she says that religion does not play any role in her political thinking. However she never shuns religion altogether, and espouses humanitarian aspects of religion: "I believed in my

religion but so what? I believed in a religion that to me never said you kill anybody. Never did I believe that religion taught violence."[6] Attia's secular views should be viewed in the context of catastrophic partition as millions of human beings fell prey to the religious bigotry. Attia's marriage to Ali Bahadur Habibullah, son of Mohammad Habibullah, formerly Vice Chancellor of Lucknow University, was an act of rebellion that left her mother dismayed. Attia Hosain worked for radio programmes at Lucknow Radio Station with Qurratulain Hyder, a noted Urdu writer.[7] In 1947, just after the partition, she emigrated to England. She started working at BBC, London, Urdu service in 1948. Hosain was in-charge of BBC programmes for women that were highly popular in those days. Hosain's career as a radio programmer was very brilliant. Upto 1950s, the programmes were not pre-recorded and these were broadcast extemporarily.[8] Attia Hosain's reputation among the British can be gauged by the fact that she was considered a wonder for her beauty and the British would say that an Englishman's/ woman's visit to India would be incomplete if he/ she did not see the beauty of Taj and Attia. On her death in 1998, Qurratulain Hyder paid tribute to Attia's beauty in her novel *Kar-e-Jahan-Daraz-Hai: Shahrah-i-Hareer* [9]

She also wrote for *The Statesman, The Pioneer, and The Free Press Journal.* Apart from these literary pieces, her first short story collection *Phoenix Fled* was published in 1953 by Chatto and Windus. *Sunlight on a Broken Column* was published in 1961 and it was written at different locations in Rahimyar Khan (Pakistan), Kathmandu, and in London. She also

worked on a second novel that could not be completed. In European countries, her work got acclaim and is in the curriculum of several universities. Her work has been translated into Urdu, and Thai languages. Intizar Husain, a famous writer has translated *Sunlight on a Broken Column* into Urdu with the title *Shakista Satoon Par Dhoop.* [10]

As the novel is assessed as a fictional narrative of Attia's social, political and familial circumstances, it is noteworthy that novel presents a number of references to *taluqdars*. The *taluqdars* "were zamindars (land owners) with large land holdings, clan leaders who operated as the de facto interface between smaller zamindars and peasants and regional rulers."[11] Their status, in terms of power, was not only limited to the collection of revenues, rather they had a privilege of audience with the British king. They had the prerogative of magisterial powers. In the kingdom of Oudh, the *taluqdars* owned their armies. After British occupation, they were stripped of their political and military powers, but the British government, on account of political compulsions restored the lands to the *taluqdars*.[12] Michael Fisher presents a graphic description of the world of *taluqdars*:

> Each landlord formed a political centre of his own, locally based world. Each held court and employed symbols such as a throne of his own and courtiers who made his court in some ways a microcosm of the Mughal and Awadh courts. [...] Local roots and their strong links to the villages under their control gave these landlords a strong and stable base from which to compete with the provincial and imperial administrations for access to local resources. [13]

Attia's family was deeply involved in the political arena. Her father Shahid Hosain Kidwai "was involved in his life politically a time (in the 1910s) when it wasn't the question of confronting the British as happened later when Gandhiji came on the scene."[14] The discussion of Attia's contemporary politics is essential as it played a major role in the formation of Muslim identity. When asked about the emergence of Muslim League, Attia replied that she was never conscious of Muslim League until 1920s and 1930s, as "it was a question of the British and how we are going to be free of them."[15] The novel presents a considerable account of nationalist movement and question of Muslim identity. Attia's political thinking was deeply "influenced by left wing thought and Panditji's and Gandhiji's movements."[16]

As far as Muslim identity is concerned Attia debunks the notion that religious and cultural differences between Hindus and Muslims, were the *raison d'être* of the formation of two separate national identities. Rather cultural difference was the false dichotomy that was an outcome of parochial political vision. She argues that there were individual motives "of getting a better life"[17] that led to the partition of India. Attia's narrative poses a realistic picture of Hindu- Muslim relations 1930 onwards, as well as Shia-Sunni sectarian strife. In the early twentieth century, both communities shared anti-British sentiments, and there was no question of any divisions of the country on the basis of religion and culture. The communal divide transpired as a result of petty politics. There were some differences between

both communities regarding each other's beliefs and diets, but both communities maintained tolerant attitudes.

The society presented in the novel, comprising Baba Jan, his friends Mr. Freemantle, Raja of Ameerpur, and Thakur Balbir Singh exemplify the composite and secular culture of Lucknow elites. The beginning of intolerance, promoted by the vested interests of the colonizer is hinted at. Saleem's remark, "What can you expect from a religion which forbids people to eat and drink together? When even a man's shadow can defile another? How is real friendship or understanding possible?"(p.197) unfolds an irreconcilable schism between the two communities. With the passage of time, splendour of shared culture is eroded and instead of multi-religious and plural social circle of Baba Jan, "...a new type of person now frequented the house. Fanatic bearded men and young zealots would come to see Saleem." The evolution was necessitated by the rapid historical changes.

In the conversation of Uncle Hamid and Saleem consisting communal politics and the different roles of Muslim League and Congress, Attia juxtaposes two streams of thoughts of the Muslim community of pre-partition India. Uncle Hamid echoes views of the nationalist Muslims that Muslim League is reactionary and communal. Saleem retorts that "...the Congress has a strong anti- Muslim element in it."(p.233) Uncle Hamid as a true successor of Baba Jan's secular ideology espouses peaceful co-existence of both communities: "I always found it was possible for Hindus and

Muslims to work together on a political level and live together in personal friendship."(p.234)

The novel can be assessed in multiple ways. Since it is narrated through the consciousness of Laila and unfolds her intellectual development, it fulfills the criterion of *bildungsroman.* A *bildungsroman* is a story of an individual's growth and development within the context of a defined social order. The process of development is defined in terms of the individual's quest for identity and meaningful existence in the social set up. The process of maturity, and quest of identity is colossal and slow and consists of many clashes between the individual's aspirations, needs, desires and the value system entailed by the social order in which the individual lives. Finally the protagonist is accommodated in society, displaying the spirit and values of the social order. The novel ends with an assessment by the protagonist of himself and his new place in that society.[18]

There is plethora of specific events that accentuates the narrator's intellectual development from childhood to maturity. Laila, the protagonist, is a member of a highly patriarchal set up. Having lost her parents at an early age, she lives with her paternal grandfather and is cared for by her father's unmarried sister Abida. As a *bildungsroman,* the novel consists of a number of youthful characters, but it is through the consciousness of Laila that readers enter into the closed inner quarters of *'Ashiana'*. The novel is autobiographical in nature and Laila's social and political ideas bear the imprints of her creator Attia Hosain. The novel appeared in 1961, but it covers the span from 1932 to 1952, a crucial period

marked by socio-political upheaval in the Indian sub-continent. Jasbir Jain is of the view, "To treat Laila of *Sunlight on a Broken Column* as the writer's alter ego would not be fair."[19] Jain's observation is based on Attia Hosain's own comment in an interview by Omar Khan where she analyzed Cecil Day Lewis' editorial assessment of the novel as 'very autobiographical': "I got very angry and I said, what does he mean by autobiographical? Every first novel or any novel will have to be part of oneself and people one knows, but it is not actually the events but it is at the same time yes."[20]

Mulk Raj Anand is of the view that the novel is "a jigsaw puzzle of her memories" [21] In *Margins of Erasure*, several critics assessed the novel as a purdah novel for "purdah motif is all pervasive in the novel."[22] Amina Amin highlights the image of restriction and freedom in the novel as well as presents "three stages of freedom" passed by the narrator.[23] Jameela Begum views it as a conscious invasion on " 'the closed women's quarters' to expose the joy, sorrows, and experiences of the unsung Muslim woman."[24] Sarla Palkar regards it "not a product of the women's movements in the USA and other western countries."[25] Attia's propinquity with the western discourse on emancipation of women cannot be rejected altogether because of her stay in England.

Laila's minute observation of the patriarchal functioning of the house makes her distinct from other female members of the family. Unlike them Laila has been given a western education. The novel can also be read as

Laila's quest for identity. Her awareness of the power politics played by the patriarchy is apparent in her vivid narration. At the outset of the novel the claustrophobic atmosphere of the house is described: "...the sick air, seeping and spreading, through the straggling house, weighed each day more oppressively on those who lived in it." (p.14)

Laila's observation of the impending death of Baba Jan, her grandfather, as well as her experiences of the strict patriarchal system in the house unfolds her clairvoyance. Gender segregation, a strict code of behaviour, is evident in the first sentence of the novel: "The day my aunt Abida moved from the *zenana* into the guest room off the corridor that led to the men's wing of the house, within call of her father's room, we knew Baba Jan had not much longer to live." (p.14)

Laila's remark about her grandfather "Surely he couldn't die, this powerful man who lived the lives of so many people for them, reducing them to fearing automatons" (p.31) describes Baba Jan's patriarchal authority; his presence will prevail even after his death in the form of Uncle Hamid. The description of Baba Jan's drawing room is metaphoric of patriarchal control. The coloured panes of arched doors symbolize the patriarchal power of Baba Jan whereas light is symbolic of freedom for the women of the house. The light of freedom is stymied by the patriarchal control. Instead of light, only shadows flicker in the vast room.

> In this vast room the coloured panes of the arched doors let in not light but shadows that moved in mirrors on the walls and the mantelpiece, that slithered under chairs, tables and divans, hid behind marble statues, lurked in giant porcelain vases and nestled in the carpets. (p.18)

The subservient and claustrophobic condition of the womenfolk is evident in Laila's assertion: "Zahra and I felt our girlhood a heavy burden." (p.14) Though Laila and Zahra grow up together, they are entirely different characters. Whereas Laila is progressive in her outlook, Zahra prefers to cocoon herself in the roles approved by the patriarchy. Laila's father had desired a different upbringing for her by emphasizing that she be educated not only in the Arabic and Persian traditions but also in the western tradition. Baba Jan, despite his staunch espousal of traditions, capitulated to his late son's wishes. Aunt Majida too, sternly opposes Uncle Mohsin's criticism of Laila's "mem-sahib education".

Attia Hosain beautifully presents a panorama of young Muslim women's lives. Marriage is a central concern. It is the most important objective of a young girl's life. Laila, whose vision is moulded by an upper crust Western education combined with the concentrated attention of her aunt, observes other young girls attempting to make sense of their lives. Zahra claims: "I was brought up to do my duty." (p.147) A third aspect is presented in the form of the promiscuous Zainab. In spite of living in Hasanpur, Zainab is more liberal in certain ways than both Laila and Zahra. Zainab is knowledgeable in matters relating to sex. This shocks the refined Laila and induces a coy reaction in Zahra. Laila's views on marriage are

radically different from other girls. For Zainab, marriage will bring her opportunity to enjoy luxuries "jewels and nice clothes." (p.295) Zainab looks forward to a home bound existence: "Now I serve my mother and father and brothers, then I'll serve my husband, my father-in-law and my mother-in-law."(p.95) Ironically, she will get jewels and nice clothes as a return for her services. For Zahra, marriage appears to be a freedom from the restrictions imposed by her mother. Romana's marriage to a profligate ruler is, according to Laila, a "luxurious incarceration". She is chosen by the "hawk-like" Begum Sahiba and her parents do not have the courage to flout the wishes of their ruler. Matrimonial alliances were according to the wishes of the elders. Laila's marriage to Ameer, posits the option of marrying the man of her choice, but she has to pay a heavy price and faces the disapproval and disgrace of her family. Nadira marries Saleem because of political and religious conviction. Her volition of marrying Saleem is of a lesser degree than that of Laila. Laila's choice is purged of any material reason; she is unbiased regarding the pedigree of Ameer and is aware of his lack of wealth. Her marriage to Ameer is analogous to her achievement of selfhood, as she asserts her individual identity by marrying Ameer and flouting the norms of the patriarchal set up. Sita's approach to marriage is peculiar as she loves Kemal but considers her love as a personal issue whereas her marriage as a public one, because of her different religious background. Her views are in conformity to the patriarchal system of arranged marriage. She admits her incapability to rebel against the patriarchy.

> My parents are the best judges of the man with the best qualifications for being the husband. They have a wider

> choice; it is only love that narrows it down to a pin point. (p.216)... What has love to do with marriage? It is like mixing oil and water? Love is anti-social, while matrimony preserves the world and its respectability. (p.296)

Abida's marriage to a widower, Shaikh Ejaz Ali is also a marriage of convenience, arranged by her brother Hamid. Notwithstanding the hostile attitude of the women at her in-laws house, she compromises the situation because of her adherence to duty and takes it as her 'kismet' (fate). Laila's observation of Abida's plight and her fatalistic attitude highlights Laila's maturity. She questions silently about the sense of duty entailed upon women: "I suffered more because of Aunt Abida's acceptance of her life- and her silence. (p.252)... 'Dutiful to whom?'... 'To what?'... 'To what I believe is true? Or those I am asked to obey? I wanted to say." (p.252)

Laila's repeated questions about her difference from others also highlight her 'progress towards individuation': "Why did you not bring me up like Zahra? Why did you send me among those other girls who are not torn apart? (p.38)...Why was I different from Zahra? What was wrong with me?" (p.161) These questions reflect Laila's internal conflicts.

In an argument Laila's friend Nita accuses her of being a stereotypical Muslim woman. Laila's response evinces her distinctive and mature approach to education: "I believe my education will make me a better human being."(p.125) Nita's approach towards education is materialistic. She views it only as a means to earn her living. For Aunt Abida, education means imbibing a sense of duty whereas Aunt Saira perceives women's education as an embellishment to fit in the

new roles assigned to wives. Uncle Hamid views education as an impetus that liberalizes the individual. However, when it comes to personal matters like Asad's preferences in education and Laila's in marriage, he is very conservative. It is imperative to contextualize these views as in Attia's contemporary society, emphasis was laid on reforms in Muslim community and there existed a widespread proclivity to safeguard Muslim identity from the cultural onslaught of British colonialism. The "responsibilities in this changing world" (pp.109-110) meant women had to keep the family space uncontaminated. There was a dichotomy between female and male arena. 'Home' was destined as an arena for women, keeping them out of public realm and social sphere was the deemed space for their male counterparts. The consciousness for female education was only to prepare them as a blend of Eastern values and Western modernity so that women may enhance the social status of their husbands. Baba Jan's views on education echo various reform movements in the Muslim community of pre-partition era.

> At the end of the last century Baba Jan had been influenced by ideas of reform among Muslims and had sent his sons to English universities. He had thought the weapons of foreigners should be used against them to preserve inherited values and culture. To copy their way was abhorrent to him. (p.86)

Though his views regarding female education are not commented upon by the narrator, his attitude is conspicuous in his decision to educate Laila at a girls' college. He approved only of gender-segregated western education for girls. Western education for women was not the part of Muslim reform agenda, as some

reformists like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan "remained adamantly opposed to women's education outside religious mode."[26]

The rebellious streak in Laila's personality is exposed on her fifteenth birthday as she sees her reflection in the mirror. The experience symbolizes self knowledge. She perceives the conflicting views of Uncle Mohsin and Aunt Abida regarding Zahra's marriage. Mohsin sternly opposes Zahra's presence while discussing her marriage prospects: "Is the girl to pass judgments on her elders? Doubt their capabilities to choose? Question their decision? Choose her own husband?" (p.20)

Aunt Abida's retort vividly portrays the marginalized status of the women in *Ashiana*: "The walls of this house are high enough, but they do not enclose a cemetery. The girl cannot choose her own husband, she has neither the upbringing nor the opportunity."(p.21)

Laila's outburst at Uncle Mohsin's maltreatment of Nandi predicts her future rebellion. As a child Laila's demand that the head carpenter make her a bow and arrow foreshadows her revolutionary spirit. The "little carved doll's cradle" made by the carpenter represents the patriarchal mindset prevalent in the society. Right from childhood, girls are induced to remain subservient to men and even the toys given to them are stereotypical. Laila shuns Zahra's proposition of marriage as a cure for Nandi's alleged breach of propriety. She shows her determination to resist the patriarchal system: "I won't be paired off like an animal." (p.29) The altercation between Zahra and Laila exposes the prevalent

disapproval of choosing one's own partner in a strict patriarchal society. Laila's assertion presents the marginalized status of women in an arranged marriage. Zahra's retort, "I suppose you're going to find a husband for yourself? May be you'll marry someone for love like English women do, who change husbands like slippers." (p.30) implies that love marriage is associated with the assertion of female sexuality that is a taboo in a patriarchal society. Laila is the sole inmate of *Ashiana* who commensurates Nandi, in contrast to other women who treat her as a nonentity.

Laila's maturity is also marked by her consciousness of marginalization on the basis of class. Laila reproaches Zahra for her maltreatment of the sweeperess. Attia presents two contrasting images. The dopattas "dyed in colour crushed from special flowers" (p.45) symbolize the colourful and luxurious life of the feudal class. This is in sharp contrast to the penury of the sweeperess's children who are "naked, thin-limbed, big-bellied, with dirty noses and large black eyes". (p.45) "Colour crushed from the special flowers" also presents imagery of oppression. The luxuries of the bourgeois are at the cost of hunger and squalor of proletariat. Zahra's assertion, "You just raise them an inch off the ground and they'll be making a foot stool of your head" (p.45) exemplifies her chauvinistic feudal attitude and class consciousness. Similarly in the third part of the novel, the juxtaposition of the pomp and glory of Raja of Bhimnagar and his "coolies in dirty, patched clothes moving like ragged scare crows" (p.181) portrays the insensitivity of feudal lords towards their subjects. Laila's first encounter with the ruthless face of feudalism transpires on the occasion of Aunt Abida's dealing with

the affairs of state. The feudal oppression of the tenants is justified in the name of justice and "matter of principle". (p.62)

Zahra's and Aunt Abida's feudal attitude evinces the nexus of patriarchy and feudalism. The women are used as pawns to perpetuate the feudal interests. Attia's proximity with the Marxist ideology finds expression in the portrayal of bourgeois exploitation. Attia seems to uphold Marxist feminists in her depiction of the oppressed proletariat, "Gender oppression is a product of class oppression, overthrowing capitalism is the means for unending women's oppression."[27] Aunt Abida and Zahra are used as agents of class oppression. On one more occasion, Laila visits Hasanpur with Kemal and Saleem, where she witnesses "poverty and squalor, disease and the waste of human beings" in sharp contrast to the grandeur and the luxuries of the feudal lords. Zahra's insistence that Laila should attend the *taluqdars'* reception or 'viceregal circus' suggests that Zahra wants to introduce Laila to the bourgeois society. The reception exposes "the opportunism, patronage and exploitation that inform their relationship to the British and their tenants."[28]

The speech of the president of the Association highlights the hypocritical altruism of the *taluqdars* towards their tenants. Attia exposes the hypocrisy of the president with mild humour as he stumbles over his words and confounds the term 'prosperity' with 'property' in his address to the viceroy: "We are aware that the propert-er-prosperity of our tenants is our proper-prosperity" (p.152) Laila is perplexed with the pompous display of *taluqdars'* privileged relationship with the British king. R.K.Kaul interprets it as Attia's disenchantment with the *zamindari* system.[29] Regarding the clout of her left wing days in the formation of her

ideology, Attia admits "...during my left wing days, I was ashamed of being born into a *Taluqdari* family and for eight hundred years having been something a part of the world in that Barabanki area (U.P. area). I am not ashamed now because looking back on it, I think we were not as evil as the people who followed, who were grabbing the whole world."[30]

Attia shows an important aspect of the Muslim elite of Lucknow through the depiction of Mushtari Bai, the courtesan. The houses of courtesans were frequently visited by young Muslim aristocrats in order to learn "...the manners, etiquette, and refinement of which there is no equivalent in Hindu society."[31] Ironically the courtesans were used as preservers of culture, and simultaneously were marginalized for the false notion of morality. The moral turpitude of the elite class males is not condemned. Mushtari Bai is sullenly treated by Hakiman Bua, and Ustani ji. She becomes the victim of pseudo morality in her old age. The money she earned was considered tainted. In order to expiate her sins, she doled out all her wealth to the charities. Similarly the depiction of a dance performance lays bare the morality of the cultured elites, "...young men and old, in silk and brocaded and embroidered *achkans* and rakish caps".(p.65) The dance performance arouses their sensuality that is expressed through their "naked eyes" (p.65) Attia glorifies the artistry of theses singers in terms of "dignity of profession" (P-65), though as a matter of fact, the profession of a singer was subjected to the worst type of exploitation in the form of prostitution. The feudal landlords maintained these courtesans or singers as their mistresses. But in the novel Mushtari Bai and other courtesans present humanitarian aspect and dignity.

Asad's life was saved by the courtesans and Mushtari Bai maintains her dignity even in her utter penury.

Laila's maturity regarding the patriarchal hegemony is conspicuous in her observation of the discussion among the 'progressive women'. Aunt Saira, Mrs. Wadia, an Anglophile Parsee, and Mrs. Waheed, a Muslim League supporter, discuss the preparations for the visit of the governor's wife to a local park. Their discussion strips their reformist and progressive ideas. Mrs. Wadia proposes to charge an admission fee to keep out the undesirable elements from the park. Saira, posing as a Muslim reformer, opposes Mrs. Wadia's proposition: "It is a public park. We had to fight very hard to make the Municipal Board wake up to the fact that there had to be a park for women, and we cannot discriminate now."(p.130) Saira's proposition is not a part of any reformist or emancipatory project; rather it is suggestive of her apprehensions regarding her husband's electoral prospects. Begum Waheed also defends the open access of the park for all women and emphasizes the utility of the park for purdah women. The discussion becomes tense when the duo Begum Waheed and Mrs. Wadia lock horns over the issue of the park. Saira pacifies them by changing the topic and presents her views regarding female education: "I believe our daughters will find it easier, having the benefit of education. That is why I believe in education for women—to prepare them for service." (p.131) Saira's views echo the reform movements for Muslim women. She espouses the patriarchal education system to prepare the women to fit in the new patriarchal roles. According to the strict patriarchal code of behaviour, a woman must be an emblem of western education and eastern cultural values.

Mrs. Wadia criticizes the Muslim community for purdah culture and discusses the scandal of a Muslim girl, "from a strict purdah family" who eloped with a Hindu boy. All the women deplore the 'wicked' and 'immoral' girl. The condemnation unfolds the reality of the 'reformist' and 'modernist' project of these women. When the boy's money was spent, he acceded to his parents' wishes and abandoned the girl, and the girl's parents refused to take her back. Mrs. Wadia says that because of communal feelings her organization could not help the destitute girl, who eventually committed suicide. The hypocrisy and hollowness of their progressive ideas offends Laila so much that she brazenly defends the girl's action and compares her love with that of heroines in novels, plays and poems. Laila's blatant assertion outrages Aunt Saira and her peers. They appear to Laila, "like paper figures, as hollow as their words, blown up with air."(p.133) Laila's daring assertion to defend the girl enunciates her revolutionary spirit. Her assertion that "there was nothing in them to frighten me" (p.133) shows that now she has realized her own power and also the hollowness of patriarchy. She exposes her revulsion to the hypocrisy of Aunt Saira and her peer group: "Inside me, however, a core of intolerence hardened against the hollowness of the ideas of progress and benevolence preached by my aunt and her companions. Rebellion began to feed upon my thoughts but found no outlet." (p.138)

Attia lambasts the double standard of morality by presenting the example of the Muslim girl. The girl is condemned for overt exposure of her sexuality in eloping with a Hindu boy. Attia criticizes the notion of *izzat/* honour, *Sharam/* modesty incurred upon women. In a strict patriarchal construct, the *izzat*/honour,

sharam/ modesty "...is defined in relation to a woman's body and a man's authority."[32]

Attia's disgust with the meaningless traditions that asphyxiate women becomes more intense where the narrator glorifies the hapless girl's attempt to trespass the "...walls of stone and fences of barbed wire, and the even stronger barriers of tradition and fear." (p.135)

Superstitions and hypocritical gender segregation cut across religious lines in the case of Nandi's mother. She dies of tetanus that is taken as 'evil spirit' and is denied treatment due to the deeply embedded notion of shame and honour: "Go to hospital to have a baby with men standing round looking on? Be shameless and be seen by all those doctors and half doctors? Better to die at home." (p.136) The same 'murderous hypocrisy' is conspicuous in Abida's treatment for her miscarriage. The male doctor is not allowed to treat Abida despite her serious condition.

The novel is also categorized as a "resistance narrative" [33] against patriarchy, feudalism and colonialism. Attia portrays feudalism and patriarchy as two pillars of contemporary society. As discussed earlier, Laila's intellectual development is accentuated through the observation of the patriarchal functioning at *Ashiana*. Laila's character can be better understood in relation to Zahra. She encounters a totally different world at school. Her predicament can be perceived through Nadira's remark: "we are paying for being the product of two cultures." (p.211) Though in contrast to Zahra, she never wears a veil; her life is encumbered by the diktats of patriarchy. Her in-between state is attributed to her education and the atmosphere of the outside world: "I felt I lived in two worlds,

an observer in an outside world and solitary in my own."(p.124) Unlike Laila, Zahra's appreciation of traditions assimilates her into the ethos of the society.

Both Zahra and Laila are orphans. Laila, however, is an heiress to her late father's property. Through the characters of Zahra and Aunt Majida, Attia critiques the rules of inheritance practiced by the Muslim patriarchy. According to Islamic jurisprudence, Aunt Majida and Abida have right of inheritance, but the patriarchy has incurred upon them the responsibilities of preserving family honour and adherence to duty, dispossessing them from their inheritance, a privilege given by Islamic jurisprudence. Hence Aunt Majida's and Zahra's status is reduced to the dependants of Baba Jan's family. In such a condition, Zahra's highest aspirations are limited to dreaming of a happy and prosperous marriage. She is brought up internalizing the conforming roles of an unmarried girl and a devoted wife. Her education and upbringing is lauded as correct and sensible by Uncle Mohsin. Her education and upbringing prepares her to fulfill the patriarchal niche of a woman: "She has read the Quran, she knows her religious duties; she can sew and cook, and at the Muslim School she learned a little English, which is what young men want now."(p.24)

In the views of Simon de Beauvoir: "The curse that is upon woman as vassal consists...in the fact that she is not permitted to do anything; so she persists in the vain pursuit of her true being through narcissism, love or religion."[34] However Attia's approach to religion is not sacrilegious and she is not obviously as radical as de Beauvoir. She respects her religion: "To me religion was that... well drawing everybody together. It was never out of my mind that I was a Muslim."[35] Hence it can be argued that Attia's critique of the patriarchal

construction of Muslim society is not directed to Islam, rather she opposes the patriarchy for its interpretation of religion as a tool to perpetuate its domination over women.

Attia's pungent criticism of the patriarchy is visible in the portrayal of Uncle Mohsin's character. Mohsin poses to be morally upright but beats up Nandi for her alleged misconduct. Laila subtly describes Mohsin's character: " Even we, the young ones, knew stories about him and the dancing girls of the city...He lived in the city with friends or relations, had a wide and influential circle of friends, dressed well, composed poetry, was an authority on classical music and dancing, and never did any work. I disliked him." (p.21)

Zahra's sense of duty and religiosity is criticized when after her marriage, she sloughs off her religiosity and acts in accordance to her husband's wishes. Her abandonment of purdah does not bring any change in her circumscribed mentality. She acts as a 'modern' wife in compliance to her husband's wishes but inwardly she adheres to conservative values. Her marriage proves to be a shift from one patriarchal order to another.

> Zahra had changed very much in her appearance, speech and mannerisms. I knew she had not changed within herself. She was now playing the part of the perfect modern wife as she had once played the part of a dutiful purdah girl... She was all her husband wished her to be as the wife of an ambitious Indian Civil Service officer. (p.140)

The national patriarchs of the freedom movement decreed that women, upholders of values, would not westernize themselves. The wives of civil servants maintained a discreet modernity by giving up purdah and attending mixed parties along with their husbands. Sometimes the British ladies hosted 'purdah' parties

for the more conservative wives of the Rajahs and other noblemen. Aunt Saira has the same conformist attitude to the patriarchal norms that Zahra displays. She is an echo of her husband Hamid. Prior to her marriage she hailed from an orthodox middle class family and lived in strict purdah, while Uncle Hamid was educated in England. Laila subtly comments upon her shift from a strictly gender segregated family to another strident patriarchal niche.

> Aunt Saira was Uncle Hamid's echo, tall and handsome, dominated by him, aggressive with others. He had groomed her by a succession of English 'lady-companions'. Before she was married, she had lived strictly in purdah, in an orthodox, middle class household. Sometimes her smart saris, discreet make up, waved hair, cigarette-holder and high-heeled shoes seemed to me like fancy dress. (p.87)

She discards the purdah not as her own conscious choice; rather she comes out of purdah, only to conform to 'new' patriarchal roles. Like Zahra, she is physically out of purdah, but her intellectual incarceration is evident in her conformist attitude. She is the stereotypical 'new' woman, embodying Eastern and Western culture. Laila narrates that Saira's westernization was much to the dismay of Baba Jan, "Baba Jan had never been able to forgive his son for opting a Western way of living, bringing his wife out of purdah, neglecting the religious education of his sons and doing all this openly and proudly." (p.87) Saira's freedom from strict purdah can not be interpreted as an expression of Hamid's reformist ideas; instead Hamid merely modified the patriarchal views of Baba Jan according to the demands of time. Saira's modernity is a mere simulacrum when it comes to the issue of Laila's marriage. First she tries to arrange Laila's marriage to a profligate ruler of an estate and later to one of her own sons in order to keep the property undivided. She is prejudiced about Ameer regarding his pedigree and

sternly opposes Laila's marriage to him. If she sulkily approves Laila's marriage it is only to save the family's reputation. In the last part, after her husband's death, she gives up 'modernity' and returns to the traditional way of life. Her reverting to traditions is also ordained by the patriarchy, as in a strict patriarchal system, a widow must refrain from the pursuit of luxury and pleasure.

Aunt Abida is portrayed as adherent to old values. She embodies the high culture of Lucknow, as she is well versed in Urdu and Persian poetry. The readers are informed that she remains a spinster because of Baba Jan's emphasis on pedigree. He "...found no one good enough for her; and refused one good proposal after another." (p.22) At the inception of the novel, her peripheral status is analogous to the status of the family servant Karam Ali, as Baba Jan, despite their strict sense of duty reprimands both of them for their alleged dereliction of duty towards him. After Baba Jan's death, Hamid hurriedly arranges her marriage to an old widower. Laila observes more strident marginalization of Aunt Abida during her visit to Abida's in-laws' house. Notwithstanding the hostile atmosphere and stereotypical jealousies of the women at Abida's in–laws' house, Abida sacrifices her individuality for 'duty'. She exhorts Laila, "You must learn that your 'self' is of little importance. It is only through service to others that you can fulfill your duty." (p.252) Despite her love for Laila, she adamantly refutes Laila's desire to marry Ameer. She takes it as Laila's defiance and disobedience: "You have been defiant and disobedient. You have put yourself above your duty to your family."[...] "You have let your family's name be bandied about scandal-

mongers and gossips. You have soiled its honour on their vulgar tongues." (p.312)

Abida's 'way of thinking' was altogether different from Laila's, as Abida's strong sense of duty and compliance to the patriarchal norms sets her apart from Laila. To her dismay, she considers Laila's love for Ameer merely as the assertion of her sexual instinct. Laila cannot reconcile with Abida, as she has rejected patriarchal hegemony in which Abida participates. Jasbir Jain considers Abida a remarkable woman, with a sense of justice and balance.[36] Her virtues are crushed when she acts insensitively towards the tenants, in compliance with the feudal rules. Sita's character ostensibly appears non- conformist, as she blatantly asserts her femininity in the company of men, throwing all caution to the winds. However, at times, she is also subjected to patriarchal subordination. Though Laila's freedom is controlled in comparison to Sita, she is also incarcerated by the tradition in spite of her education in England and her western ways of life. She is deeply in love with Kemal, but is not daring enough to transcend religious boundaries in order to marry him. Out of frustration, she yields to the wishes of her parents and gives in to a marriage void of love, sympathy, and understanding. She is on equal footing as Saira and Zahra. Their modernity is only a simulacrum. Inwardly they are subjected to patriarchal hegemony. But she inverts the fetishistic role of 'Sita' in Hindu mythology, as she continues to meet Kemal even after her marriage. She considers her love for Kemal as an impetus that gives her strength to fulfill her duty towards her husband.

> I had children by my husband though my body revolted against the touch of any man I did not love. But it was bearable if I had a hope of being with Kemal, as if that cleansed me. After he stopped seeing me it did not matter what happened. If my body could accept one man without love it could accept others. One discovers so many reasons for sleeping with a man once love is put out of the way. (p.297)

One can assume that Sita's ideas are perverse but through them we can easily estimate her frustration caused by her unconsummated love for Kemal.

Nandi's character exposes the oppression of women on the basis of class. She is the daughter of Jumman, the washerman. Her beautiful face, according to Hakiman Bua "...would be a scourge to her parents because it was not the face of a girl of the lower castes." (p.27) Nandi is childhood playmate of Laila. Her father, Jumman, beats her for violating the patriarchal rule of modesty by visiting men's quarters alone. Jumman accuses her saying that she was "...found by the driver with the cleaner in the garage." (p.27) Nandi explains that she went to give him the shirt that he had forgotten. But Nandi's visit to men's quarters is a violation. She trespasses the boundaries of female space, laid down by the patriarchy. Men's quarters are symbolic of social sphere that is restricted for women. A woman's access to the male sphere is tantamount to immorality and violation of respectability in a strict patriarchal construct.

Laila is the only female who commensurates the plight of Nandi. Prior to this allegation, Nandi threw a sharp stone at the groom of the English family next door because he peeped over the wall while she bathed. After some days, she bit the post man, saying he tried to molest her. The matter of Nandi's constant violation of decorum is brought to Aunt Abida who refers it to Uncle Mohsin.

Mohsin scornfully prods Nandi and calls her promiscuous, "...this slut of a girl is a liar, a wanton."(p.28) Nandi retaliates, "A slut? A wanton? And who are you to say it who would have made me one had I let you?" She lambasts the pseudo morality of feudal class. Nandi is punished for her 'misconduct' by being packed off to her uncle's house where she is condemned and maltreated by her aunt and grandmother. Laila, during her visit to Hasanpur, meets Nandi. She tells Laila about the sexual exploits of the moulvi's daughter. These were kept hidden in order to preserve the 'respectability' of the girl. Zainab scolds Nandi for maligning the respectable people. But Nandi's fury at the double standards of the feudal patriarchy is immense and she spurns the false notions of bourgeois respectability, "Respectability can be preserved like pickle in gold and silver. If this girl...had been poor would they have been able to bribe the mid wife and get rid of her baby and then buy a husband for her." (p.97)

Nandi informs Laila about Saliman's sexual abuse by Ghulam Ali and her subsequent death in childbirth. Ghulam Ali impregnated Saliman and when the matter was divulged, Saliman was dismissed from service whereas Ghulam Ali's position in the house remained intact. Through Saliman's colossal suffering, Attia unfolds the double standards of morality. Nandi's statement, "You don't know what life can be for us. We are the prey of every man's desire" (p.168) unearths the extreme form of degradation and exploitation of the underprivileged. Nandi's retribution of Ghulam Ali for Saliman's death accentuates her rebellion. She does not take andocentric practices for granted. She tantalizes Ghulam Ali and then accuses him of assaulting her. Ghulam Ali is brutally beaten by the servants and is subsequently dismissed by his master. Through Nandi's insight into the male

predatory attitude towards women, Attia hits hard at the commodification of women. Though Nandi is uneducated, her strong will to counter the patriarchal oppressions makes her remarkable. But she also becomes the victim of Ghulam Ali's diabolic onslaught, as he gashes her arm and disfigures her beauty by scarring her face from cheek to chin.

Nandi does not want to be lost in oblivion and desires to have a child. She is disgusted with her old husband who cannot impregnate her: "When I die there will be nothing to remember me by." (p.253) Laila reminds her that being a Hindu she will be born again. Nandi expresses her desire to create her own identity:

> Of course. But what then? Suppose I die today, and tomorrow I come back to you as a sparrow like the silly creature that pecks at itself in your looking glass every day, would you know me? I wouldn't be Nandi any more, Nandi would be dead? (p.253)

She upturns the patriarchal notion of morality by indulging in an extra-marital relationship and overtly confesses the illegitimacy of her child. In order to make her husband realize his impotency, she leaves him and goes to Laila to look after Laila's child as an ayah. She shatters all the notions of morality and respectability incurred by the patriarchy:

> It's not my husband's, of course. How could that old dotard give me one? [...] Or the old fool might have fancied his youth had returned and claimed the child, and I would have been tied to him forever. I could not endure him any longer, and I wanted the child. (p.291)

Jasbir Jain comments: "Nandi's progress from girlhood to motherhood is an impulsive, natural maturing which takes place without any of the support structures like a protective mother or an elder sister, which a young girl may expect."[37]

As a "narrative about the emerging Indian nation and about emerging national identities"[38] and narrative of partition *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, presents a feminine view of nation formation and national identities in contrast to 'official' nationalism that is dominated by the male and male narratives of nationalism, where an 'author claims the authority to speak on behalf of the entire nation and its diverse inhabitants. [39] The novel exposes a Muslim woman's point of view in nation formation. Nationalism subjugates women and they have an "indirect relationship" [40] with nationalism and the nation through men. The dichotomy of the male /female sphere is attributed to nationalism. Social sphere was specified as a male realm in order to counter colonial onslaught. Women were confined to the inner sphere or the family space, as the family space was considered more vulnerable to the cultural onslaught of colonialism. Nationalism puts the onus of cultural preservation on women, relegating them to the inner sphere of society. The image of the mother figure was projected in order to depict the colonized nation. In the freedom struggle, the image of the oppressed female desecrated by the colonizers was depicted in order to awaken the nationalist men to avenge the violation of the mother figure. In this nationalist discourse, the role of the mother was assigned to women to nurture and bring up nationalist sons. The women were assigned the responsibility to instill cultural and nationalistic values in their progeny.

Attia's narrative counters the British justification of the colonization of India. They claimed that they rescued Indian women from a debauched and

degenerate system. Attia shows that British colonialism aggravated the dismal condition of women. In order to emulate their western counterparts, women were subjected to a new and more strident patriarchal code of conduct in the public space. In contrast to liberal feminists who view that there need not "...be new political, economic, and social categories to end gender oppression"[41], Attia seems to uphold radical feminists' stand that "new political, economic, and social categories needed to be constructed to end the patriarchy's oppression of women."[42] Colonialism and feudalism were the two tenacious institutions of Attia's contemporary society. In a scathing analogy Attia compares feudalism with that of the tribal systems that ill-treated women. The ramifications of this tribal ideology are discussed elaborately.

In the second part of the novel, the nationalist struggle is discussed at length. Attia delineates the response of Muslim elites to anti-colonial struggle. The narrative presents an account of the tumultuous period of anti-colonial resistance, marked by the conflict with the British. She also exposes the sectarian and communal divide. Laila's search for identity and her progress of individuation is concomitant to the nationalist struggle. Laila's growing awareness of her capabilities to undermine the patriarchal set up, is simultaneous to the awakening of the Indian masses to oust the colonizer. The novel presents conflicting ideologies- Gandhian non-cooperation, Marxist ideology of exploitative economic powers, and views of the Muslim League that demanded a separate nation. Congress declined the demand of separate electorate and upheld the abolition of feudal systems. Saleem's proximity to Muslim League, Zahid's hatred for the

Shia community as well as Uncle Hamid's vision of peaceful co-existance and his disapproval of the freedom struggle, present a microcosmic view of Attia's contemporary society.

Female characters had different opinions regarding national politics. Nita is the only character who opted for nationalist movement. She dies of a skull fracture in a lathicharge (baton charge) by the police on a procession of students. Nadira's views reflect her parent's political convictions, and Joan views politics through the lens of her Anglo-Indian origin. Zahra's views are in consonance with her husband. The novel presents metamorphosis in the social structure. Uncle Hamid's displeasure at Kemal's jokes exposes the existentialist fear of *taluqdars.* Public outcry against the feudal system was an emergent trend.

> Our existence is threatened and you think it a joke? Our fathers and forefathers handed us down rights and privileges which it is our duty to preserve. I have no use for ingrates who enjoy privileges without accepting responsibilities. (p.199)

The conversation between Laila and Uncle Hamid juxtaposes two views of the anti-colonial struggle. Laila calls it as a movement, whereas Uncle Hamid condemns it as "a demonstration of irresponsible hooliganism" (p.160) Hamid's assertion regarding Laila's freedom of thought and action echoes the British justification of colonization of India.: "You must know that freedom of action must be controlled until the mind reaches maturity and one's powers of judgment are fully developed. (p.160)

He refuses permission to Asad to study at Jamia and to work for the nationalist cause. With the passage of time, Hamid has to yield to the forces of social and political change and he contests the election of 1937 for a reserved constituency for *taluqdars* to the Provincial Legislature. *Taluqdars'* loyalty to the British government is presented through the depiction of the Viceroy's visit. The Viceroy's visit is celebrated with enthusiasm and elation. Asad mocks the celebrations and condemns it as a "viceregal circus".

Asad calls the year 1937 young and exciting. Saleem finds the *taluqdars* who participated in the national politics "the instrument by which the historical process" (p.195) is going to destroy the feudal class. Laila mocks the election campaign of Uncle Hamid, and decries it as ostentation to prove his credence of social service. Uncle Hamid acts as a pragmatic politician and unhesitatingly invites Shekh Waliuddin, who incites Shia-Sunni riots and later emerges as the hero who stops it. With some political maneuvering, Hamid wins the election. Saleem as a political analyst, views his father's victory merely as a ruse: "That we won by a few votes, after a recount, is no indication of our real strength. It merely shows how politically ignorant the masses are, how unprepared for democracy." (p.177)

Attia commensurates the decaying feudal system and the "gradual crumbling" (p.282) of Uncle Hamid's dreams and ambitions. Hamid's predicament is assessed by Laila at political, social as well as emotional levels. "Politically" Laila comments "...he had fought a losing battle against new forces

that were slowly and inexorably destroying the rights and privileges in which he had believed." (p.282) At the social level, he encountered inevitable transitions that eroded the way of life that "he had cultivated so carefully." (p.282) "Emotionally, his family had grown away from him" (p.282) and he ultimately becomes an isolated, solitary figure.

It is noteworthy that Laila's realization of her inherent capabilities has affinity with the process of social change: "For the first time I became aware that barriers built by the mind had no more substance than the fears that raised them; once they were overcome by action, it was hard to believe they had ever existed." (p.190)

As a partition narrative, the novel presents the poignancy of partition "with great objectivity and sympathetic understanding".[43] The post-partition and pre-partition events are objectified. Attia's vision of shared identity and secularism dominates other dissenting voices that espouse a separate nation on the basis of different cultural and religious identity. Attia was directly impinged by the disastrous partition. Regarding her motive of writing a partition narrative, Attia states, "I wanted to write about that agonizing heart break when we were all split up and a brother could not see a brother and a mother could not be with her dying son and families that had been proud to always collect together. When there were weddings or deaths or births or anything, cannot be together."[44]

The novel presents Attia's nostalgia for the pre-partition days. This is the first novel, written by a Muslim that evinces the divisions of Muslims between

Congress and Muslim League. The partition is not directly portrayed, but with its implications on social, cultural, and political life. Baba Jan's death brings about disintegration to the nucleus family: "After Baba Jan's death it was as if tight hands had been loosened which had tied together those who had lived under the power of his will and authority."(p.112)

The elite Muslim culture of North India is defined painstakingly. Laila is presented as a passive observer of the tumultuous period of nationalist movement. The communal relations that led to the division of the country are vividly portrayed along with the sectarian Shia- Sunni strife within the Muslim Community. The confronting views of different political parties are also discussed, but at the same time, Attia hits hard on the hypocritical politicians who fomented communal hatred for their vested interests. Religious emotions were the easiest objects to be exploited by the politicians: "...the Muslim League was gaining strength from its appeal to the political and economic fears of the Muslims as the largest minority in the country, and to their religious emotions and pride." (p.194)

The hatred prevailed at the community level. It also exacerbated the hostility within the Muslim community. Zahid disparagingly remarks on the religious convictions of Shias and calls them idolatrous and sinful. Asad insightfully remarks on the burgeoning communal hatred and holds the British responsible for fanning the communal emotions: "Something must be done to

prove that the British are here to enforce law and order, and stop us killing each other." (p.56)

Zahid describes the mourning of Muharram as "sum total of hypocrisy." (p.69) He is critical of all those people who have divided the community into smaller sections. Laila is perplexed by Zahid's hatred and asks: "Will your hatred unite us Zahid? It makes no distinction between Muslims and Non-Muslims." (p.69) The same communal bias can be perceived in the conversation of Laila's peer group. The conversation of Laila, Joan, Nita and Nadira exposes the communal prejudices beneath the surface of friendship. Joan, the Anglo Indian calls Muslims aliens. Nita agrees and says, "They can go back to where they came from if they think they're aliens." (p.126) Nadira responds angrily: "There speaks the Hindu. Scratch deep, and what is hidden under progressive ideas? The same communalism of which you accuse me."(p.126) Nita and Nadira criticize the British, but at the same time they cast aspersions on each other for their different religious identities. Hosain shows that Indians of different religious convictions were at odds, despite their exalted notion of communal harmony. Saleem's 'Hinduphobia' exemplifies another view of Muslim community that led to the partition of India: "The majority of Hindus have not forgotten or forgiven the Muslims for having ruled over them for hundreds of years. Now they can democratically take revenge." (p.234)

The much awaited Independence of India transpired in 1947 with destruction, violence and hatred among the citizens. Attia talks about the partition in a melancholic tone: "And in 1947 came the partition of the country, and the people of India and Pakistan celebrated Independence in the midst of bloody

migrations from one to another." (p.283) Hosain regards them fortunate who died before partition and were spared from witnessing the macabre picture of violence. Uncle Hamid dies before partition: "Death spared him the putrescent culmination, the violent orgasm of hate that followed the independence he had worked for in his own fashion." (P.283) Attia highlights the shortsightedness of those who demanded a separate nation for Muslims. Saleem and other leaders did not expect the partition to play such havoc. With the partition, the world of feudal class cracked and was destroyed. Things happened as Uncle Hamid and Asad had predicted: "The ugliness is inevitable. When palaces are pulled down and mud huts are exposed to view it is not a pleasant sight. There is rubble and dust in any demolition." (p.277-278) Attia sympathetically describes the predicament of landowners in the post-partition era: "Faced by prospects of poverty, by the actual loss of privilege, there were many who lost their balance of mind when their world cracked apart. Others retired to anonymity in their villages." (p.277) Partition came as a blow to Aunt Saira's dreams. It snatched all the happiness of her life. Saleem migrated to Pakistan after the partition. Kemal's way of life changed entirely when he married Perin Wadia. He asked his mother to cut down her expenses.

Attia shows that personal ambitions were at the root of partition. In order to fulfill the dreams of a better future, the people wielded religion as a tool. Saleem migrated to Pakistan as he viewed it as a land of his dreams that promised him a better future. Nadira emphasized on the loyalty to her faith: "Pakistan needs us to build it up as a refuge where all Muslims can be safe and free." (p.288) Conversely, Kemal identified with the country of his birth and not his faith: "A

choice presupposes both sides mean the same to me...This is my country. I belong to it. I love it." (p.287) However, ironically Kemal and Saira encountered disappointment as Saleem's property was declared as evacuee property and was taken away by a custodian. Aunt Saira is disgusted with the government and angrily calls it a "robber government".

The final section of the novel is full of pessimism and nostalgia. Laila visits *Ashiana* after fourteen years. She witnesses a drastic change in the social and cultural scenario. The grandeur of *Ashiana,* that once symbolized the grandeur of *taluqdari*, is turned into the ugliness "like the skin of a once beautiful woman struck by leprosy." (p.271) Attia's sense of belonging is exposed in her description of post-partition Lucknow. Laila is inundated by emotions. Attia laments for the decay of Lukhnavi culture through the voice of Ranjit. He considers Saleem as quintessential of rich cultural tradition of Lucknow: "Saleem, you went away and these others replaced you. Fair exchange is no robbery they say-but you took our language and our manners, and we were brought a cacophony that grate the ears and manners that sear the soul." (p.301) Attia highlights extreme hatred through a refugee who insults Saleem: "They're all bloody traitors –every bloody Muslim –deep in their bloody hearts." (p.302) Despite this hatred, sincere friendship cuts across religious lines. Ranjit and Sita rescue Laila and her baby in the midst of horrific communal riots. Laila condemns the supporters of partition: "Do you know who saved all the others who had no Sitas and Ranjits? Where were all their leaders? Safely across the border. The

only people left to save them were those very Hindus against whom they had ranted."(p.304)

In short, Attia emphasizes the futility of partition. Niaz Zaman maintains:

> Hosain, a minority writer, stresses the folly of partition through Laila who suggests that, despite the pain, despite the loss, India is large enough to contain different religious groups. The villain in Hosain are not people from the other religious groups, but those co-religionists who deny that people of different religion can live in India. [45]

Attia Hosain's *Phoenix Fled* is a collection of short stories. *Phoenix Fled* and *After the Storm* delineate the cataclysmic partition. The title story is highly metaphorical and presents the misery of partition and its aftermath. As far as identity of the protagonist, old Granny, is concerned, she is nameless and hence is not identified on the basis of her religious conviction, rather she is identified with the existence of her village. The character sketch of grandmother is lively:

> She was so old she had become static in time, could never be older, had surely never been young. Her dry wrinkled skin was loose around the skeleton. It enclosed her eyes in folds, hiding the yellowed cornea surrounding lusterless pupils. Yet there was vision enough to make her unconscious of its loss. (p.9)

Grandmother's existence is associated to her "changeless circumscribed world" (p.9) of "the walls, the arches, the thatch, the courtyard, the doll's house, the curtain, the door to the outside world." (p.10) The outside world of "impatient sound of car horn, and the distant desolate screech of an engine's whistle" (p.10) is alien to the old lady and in sharp contrast to her peaceful circumscribed world of traditions.

The story presents the historical perspectives of mutiny, of partition, and the subsequent communal frenzy of which the old Granny becomes the victim. In the character of old Granny, a deep consciousness of identity is presented as she refuses to migrate, and sticks to her roots despite the inhuman behavior of the neighbours. The feeble and withering existence of old Granny is suggestive of withering human values. Old Granny roots herself to her motherland. The younger generations are of no significance in the story as they simply fulfill the formality of intruding into the life of the old woman. Jasbir Jain compares the conversation of the great grand children and the old lady to a fairy tale and presents it as a cultural narrative.[46] Love of the great grand children is spontaneous, contrary to the "grudging, dutiful affection of the elders to a 'parasitic old woman". (p.11) Old Granny's passionate love of the dolls' house symbolizes her love of traditions and culture. The great grand children enjoy playing with the dolls' house. The old woman, on the insistence of the great grand children narrates the story of the red-faced soldiers, "like monkeys in red coats" (p.13) and presents an account of war, loot, rape and exploitation of the masses by an invading army. As the scenario changes, the red faced soldiers are replaced by black ones. The arrival of black soldiers also implies the communal tension owing to the partition. The concluding part of the story, states the devastation of partition that dislocated the family of the old woman and thus separated her from her near and dear ones. The narrator skillfully presents the miseries of the fleeing people midst high tension.

> When the dread moment was upon them naked of their disguising hopes, they remembered only the urgency of their frenzied need to escape. Terror silenced the women's wails, tore their thoughts from possessions left behind; it smothered the children's whimpering and drove all words from men's tongues but Hurry, Hurry. (p.14)

Despite the prevalent communal frenzy, old Granny is hopeful that the fleeing people will return as in the past. During the Mutiny she herself had returned. But now the situation is different altogether. During the Mutiny people had to escape from an alien army, but now the enemy was the neighbour with a different faith. Old Granny's hopes are shattered as she falls prey to this frenzy and is charred to death in her house that is set on fire.

As far as the title of the story is concerned, old Granny is dead, and hence the culture, tradition and human values that are symbolized by her also die with her. There is no suggestion in the story that old Granny will be resurrected from the ashes, but the author seems hopeful that human values will be resurrected. Old Granny's death represented the old world and its values. Despite physical weakness, she guarded the old order. With her death, the old system fell apart.

After the Storm delineates the implications of the partition. The narrator presents the scarred memory of a little girl who is a lone survivor of the violence of the partition. The girl's religious identity is kept hidden and she is named as Bibi. She comes to the narrator's house, as a domestic help, but the narrator adopts her. The story from the beginning presents the imagery of cruelty and inhumanity resulting from communal divide. Words like "scratched mutilation", "dust" and "hot wind" are used in order to accentuate barbarism and violence. The small necked bottle in which the flowers are crammed, is symbolic of the girl who "triumphantly survived scratched mutilation" of her family. The narrator describes the features of Bibi, "a child small and thin with serious anxious eyes and a smile on her face, a garland in her hand." (p.79) The description implies that the

catastrophic partition has snatched the childhood of the girl. She has directly stepped into adulthood skipping adolescence altogether. The narrator describes that she keeps her head covered like the older women, with dupattas, and is aware of her duties as a domestic help.

> I could not tell her age. Her assured manner made me feel younger than herself. Her eyes had no memories of childhood. Her body was of a child of nine or ten, but its undernourished thinness was deceptive; she could have been eleven or twelve. There was no telling of how many years of childhood life had robbed her. (p.79,80)

Jasbir Jain comments upon the dislocation of Bibi: "She is doubly dislocated - by the riots /civil war into a refugee camp and her childhood into adulthood. It is a separation from both her home and herself."[47] The narrator's comment that "She tore me out of the shroud of my thoughts" (p.79) expresses her concern for the damaged psyche of the girl. Hardened by life's experiences, she has lost touch with humanity. The girl's love of flowers that "no one else cared to pick" and "garlands no one else cared to thread" (p.80) symbolizes her attempt to forget the violence and bloodshed that she had witnessed directly. The narrator comments upon the horrific experiences of the girl: "But she was now a symbol and around her hovered the ghosts of all one feared."(p.81) Through the memories of the girl, the narrator presents an account of macabre killings in the communal riots. In the end, the girl is shown putting fresh flowers in the bottle giving an impression that she is trying to overcome the dark memories of the past.

The other stories in the collection, deal with different aspects of human life. *The First Party* probes the psyche of a woman, introduced to a party

dominated by an alien western culture. The woman is newly wed and attends the party with her husband. The bewilderment and perplexity of the woman at her encounter with an alien culture and way of life at the party is discussed at length. The woman is brought up in a strict gender segregated family and has internalized the Indian concepts of modesty (sharam) and honour (izzat). The people in the party do not value the traditions and cultural norms to which the woman has a strong sense of belonging. She experiences revulsion at the free mingling of opposite sexes and for the women who were drinking and smoking. The closeness of a couple dancing, her husband's drinking, the girl singing and swaying her hips, the strange dress of the girl that exposed more than hid her body, all fill her with abhorrence. She is uncomfortable at her own attire, as she is dressed in bright rich clothes and heavy jewellery in contrast to other women. Her strong adherence to her cultural norms sets her apart from others and eventually from her husband. She considers the ladies immoral:

> She felt angry again. The disgusting, shameless hussies, bold and free with men, their clothes adorning nakedness not hiding it, with their painted false mouths, that short hair that looked like the mad woman's whose hair was cropped to stop her pulling it out. (p.20)

She is aghast at the closeness of men and women while they dance and regards it as "an assault on the basic precept by which her convictions were shaped, her life was controlled. Not against touch alone, but sound and sight, had barriers been raised against man's desire." (p.21)

The story brilliantly states the inner workings of the woman's mind; the narrator does not disparage the woman's upbringing and her acceptance of values,

rather the cultural clash of two diverse value systems. The woman's entry into the new modern world, represented by the party, is maneouvered by her husband. The husband personifies the patriarchy. Eventually the woman refuses to dance with him and thus refuses to conform to the new patriarchal niche.

The next three stories present necessity of marriage in Indian society and its ramifications on the lives of women. *Time is Unredeemable* reflects the plight of Bano, waiting for her husband coming from England after a long gap of nine years. Bano's marriage is hastily arranged just one month before her husband's departure to England. The marriage is regarded as a moral insurance, saving her husband from temptation in England. Bano has eagerly been waiting for her husband who has wasted his time and his father's money. His mother mourns at his formless future. Bano's elation and her preparations at the news of her husband's return are discussed in a subtle manner. She prepares herself for the reunion. She attempts to step into the role of a modern, and English educated wife, in compliance to her husband's English education. In order to impress her husband she starts to learn English, buys modern saris and gets a coat with the help of Mrs. Ram:

> Every breath and movement and thought now became a preparation of herself for the first moment of meeting Arshad. Above all else she wished to make him realize that she was not an ignorant girl of whom he, with his foreign education, need be ashamed. (p.62)

Jasbir Jain attributes Bano's efforts as her "bridging the gap between her upbringing and her husband's life style."[48] Bano's endeavours to impress her husband and her expectation to win his love end in fiasco as eventually her

husband refuses to sleep with her in the same room. He, much to Bano's dismay rejects her coat by saying, "I didn't want you to wear this old coat anyway. It reminds me of ...my landlady...no, of...Mrs. Ram." (p.77) Bano's mental trauma is attributed to pseudo-morality as her marriage is arranged to keep her husband morally upright. Her peripheralisation is evident as even after nine years separation from her husband, she has to sit in her room, where he will come to her after meeting everybody else.

The Street of the Moon, presents the complex results of an unequal marriage. Kalloo has been working in a feudal household as a cook since time immemorial on a meager salary. Despite his inadequate salary, he is emotionally involved with the family and considers himself as a member. Having lost his wife in the early years, he lives an insatiated sexual life. In order to fulfill his sexual needs, he often visits Street of the Moon to be entertained by the prostitutes and takes opium that arouses in him a feeling of youthfulness. His unfulfilled sexual needs are noticed by Mughlani, the house maid, who arranges his marriage to Hasina, the daughter of Naseera, another servant at the house. Hasina is much younger to Kalloo. His life takes an ugly turn after his marriage to Hasina, as she finds him repulsive and mocks him silently. Kalloo is aware of his status in the eyes of Hasina and perceives 'cruel mirth' and 'cruel mockery'. She, out of her repulsion for Kalloo, turns to Munnay, Kalloo's son from his first wife and establishes illicit sexual relations with him. Her liaison with Munnay ends as Kalloo catches them red handed. She starts a new affair with Husnoo, another servant at the house and elopes with him. After some time when Husnoo runs out

of money, he abandons her and returns. In the final scene, Kalloo encounters Hasina in a brothel, which he visits one night.

The story does not simply state the theme of love and betrayal in a conventional manner, rather it highlights that marriage is used as a mode of oppression in a patriarchal society, irrespective of social class. Hasina's marriage and her subsequent sexual exploits with Munnay and Husnoo are attributed to the patriarchal notion of marriage. She drifts into an unequal marriage owing to her low economic and social status. As a young girl she dreamt of a young groom. Her dreams, however were shattered when she was thrown into a loveless marriage.

> Hasina wished she could see all the wonderful things she would soon possess. Specially the betel box. Now she could eat betel all day, her own made by herself, and she would eat even tobacco –the tiny silver pellets the Begum ate. She would do as she pleased after she was married –that silly Kalloo, he was so funny, she would laugh at him all day. (p.36)

Hasina's dreams of marriage are analogous to Zainab's dreams in *Sunlight On a Broken Column,* who also believes that marriage will give an opportunity to enjoy the luxuries of life like jewels and nice clothes. Hasina is treated merely as an object, an automaton, at the disposal of patriarchy. Her wishes, emotions and dreams of happy marriage are not taken into account. Moreover, her poor economic status is also responsible for her unequal marriage. In the end she becomes a prostitute on account of economic compulsions. Another thing that is underscored is the inducement of notions of *sharam* (modesty) and *izzat* (honour) in the girls. Hasina is induced to docile and womanly behaviour in order to

maintain the sanctity of moral laws. When she defies the rules of moral behaviour, she is ostracized, and considered dead even by her mother, though Husnoo with whom she elopes, is reemployed at the house.

The Daughter-in-law exposes the psychological trauma of a child bride. A girl of nine years gets married to the younger son of Nasiban, the ayah at a feudal house. Nasiban is deceived by the girl's family. The girl is not mature enough to be a wife or mother. After the marriage, the girl remains at her mother's house till she attains puberty and Nasiban pays five rupees monthly to her mother. But due to the persistent demand from the girl's mother to increase the money, Nasiban requests her feudal mistress to keep the daughter-in-law with her. The household chores are disrupted when the daughter-in-law is sent for from the village. Things disappear and automatically reappear, when the women servants raise hue and cry. Many things are destroyed, a lace frock is cut into pieces, and the head cloth and silk of the quilt are smeared with red colour. All the maid servants suspect the girl for these misdeeds. Their suspicion proves to be true as the girl's hands are stained in red colour. She is locked up, persecuted, beaten up and is labeled as 'possessed' by the spirits. Ironically, the girl does not have any memory of committing these misdeeds. She is scared, alone and suffers from a huge sense of insecurity. Her miseries are attributed to her dislocation. Her childhood is destroyed by her early marriage. Even her mother treats her as the 'other' after her marriage. Her mother-in-law considers her as a burden as she is not mature enough to fulfill the patriarchal niche of a wife. She lives a life void of love and compassion and her status is reduced to a long wait. The girl is haunted by a

memory of a sexual assault in her childhood: "The big black man with a tiger's face. Sometimes it's a dog's face. And he puts his knee on my chest, and then I can't breathe." (p.112) Her phobia may also imply her obsession regarding her marital life in the years to come, as after attaining puberty, she will be used as a passive sexual object. Begum Sahib comes as her rescuer. She is the sole character who understands the girl's mental trauma. It is through Begum Sahiba that the readers come to know the name of the girl. Munni attaches herself to Begum Sahiba as she swears to mend her ways, but finally she is sent back to her mother. She takes away Begum Sahiba's photograph. Apart from the trauma of the child, Attia Hosain presents the frequent marginalization of the girl child in lower class families. The patriarchal notion of arranging the marriage of girls as early as possible, puts the girls of lower class families in a mental trauma as they are pushed into unequal marriages as is evident through the plight of Hasina and Munni. Hasina's attempts to free herself from a loveless, unequal marriage prove futile as she ends up as a prostitute. Munni is too young to revolt against the patriarchal structure and mutely takes her marriage as her fate (kismet). Attia Hosain depicts how people are encumbered by traditions. Notwithstanding her poor status, Nasiban sells off her jewels and spends all her savings on her son's marriage in order to keep intact her reputation among her neighbours.

Gossamer Thread exposes a conflict between emotion and reason. A pragmatic husband is proud of his progressive leanings and possession of progressive literature. The story starts with a social and political unrest. The husband returns home with an anxious mind and responds to his docile wife with

irritation. The husband's thoughts are dominated by ambition and snobbery. He analyses the bygone days of his life. During his stay abroad, he cherishes a non-conformist attitude towards restrictions and traditions. His marriage is a concession to his mother who arranges it to a girl "decorative enough and submissive enough to increase his self confidence". (p.150) One evening there is an upheaval due to a strike called by communists. The husband and wife sit together and the wife talks about the party invitations, about dinner, about the unrest and the people being hurt due to the strike, but the husband remains lost in the thoughts of his college days and the struggle of power and its implications on his relationship with his friends. The husband's bogus 'progressive' political ideas are exposed when his communist friend Arun comes to seek refuge for a night as the police were chasing him. The husband rejects his request because he does not want to jeopardize his career. The disappointed Arun returns to the door but the submissive wife now takes a bold step. She realizes the grievousness of the situation and asks Arun to stay. The wife's approach is based on her intelligence which otherwise was not visible.

This Was All the Harvest exposes a sordid face of Indian polity, in which the naïve, and idealistic young generation is duped by the politicians. The young school master's idealism is dashed when he encounters the real face of the ingratituous politician. The young man visits the politician for whom he has arduously campaigned during the election, trusting that his political views will build a new world. The young man is so idealistic that he does not visit his elder sister even at her deathbed. The young man takes the election campaign as his

duty to materialize his political views and convictions. He retorts angrily when the chaprassi reproaches him for his absence from his sister's deathbed: "My duty?" cut in the young man angrily. "To whom? The living or dead? The past or the future? To my family or my faith?" (p.160) But all his idealism and expectations are shattered when the politician for whom he has harboured a delusion, refuses even to remember him: "Yes, yes the name is familiar, very familiar. I think I've seen you somewhere..." (p.174)

Meanwhile the young man narrates how he neglected his studies and his career for the sake of his political convictions besides his mother's persistent dissuasion from the election campaign. The chaprassi also gives the reference of his brother in order to focus on the manipulation by the politicians. He narrates that how a busload of people were refrained from voting when their credibility was doubted by Raja Sahib, the candidate. The young man also narrates the incident of the headman of a village who bargained for his vote out of his greed for land. Eventually the young man faces a blow on his expectations and realizes the futility of his sacrifice when the politician refuses to recognizes him. Attia Hosain's insight into human psyche is deep as derecognition of sacrifices is a commonplace experience in Indian polity.

White Leopard gives a glimpse of the narrator's household in which Shiv Prasad enjoys protection after abandoning his life as a dreaded criminal. Attia Hosain evinces caste prejudice of Shiv Prasad as well as his sense of honour when his son Shambhu is accused of stealing money by the latter's employer Mr. Bell, a

Christian convert who was a shoe maker in his early life. Shiv Prasad's gratitude towards the narrator's family and his sense of honour is remarkable: "You and your family can abuse me, spit on me; but that man cannot speak to me or my son as he did. My son sells his service, not his honour." (p.189) Shiv Prasad presents composite Hindu-Muslim culture:

> Not only did he observe the rituals of his own religion, but in the month of Moharram he kept a 'tazia' in a specially prepared shed. On the tenth day of the month, the elaborate man-high tomb made of bright-coloured paper and tinsel was carried to its burial in procession. The Muslim servants recited dirges in memory of the martyred family of the prophet, while he and his sons followed in barefooted, bareheaded respect. (p.176)

Attia Hosain shows that servants from different faiths, in a Muslim household willingly observe Muslim traditions and rituals. Like Shiv Prasad, Jumman, the washer man in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* distributes *sherbet* on the occasion of Moharram.

The Loss also presents the story of an old woman, steeped in a sense of honour. Lifetime savings that she kept in a box are stolen. The police suspect that the thief is none other than her own son. In order to catch the thief, an age old custom is observed. Everyone has to chew a handful of rice and it turns dry powder in the mouth of the thief. But the old woman, in order to save her honour, does not let her son to chew the rice.

A Woman and a Child deals with the desperation of a barren woman to have a baby. She and her husband have visited many shrines and have observed many rituals in the pursuit of a miracle but their hopes are not fulfilled. Then the

woman meets a poor woman and becomes jealous of her as she has given birth to a baby. She pleads with the poor woman and visits her and gifts expensive toys to the baby. The end of the story is very pathetic as the baby is choked to death in a fatal embrace by the barren woman.

Ramu presents emotional attachment of a sweeper's son to Moti, Panditji's watchdog. The dog is bought for three hundred rupees and is given to Ramu to look after for three rupees monthly. Ramu's emotional attachment is apparent as he spends sleepless nights when he does not find Moti in its place. On account of his love for the dog, he does not chain it. Tragically Moti is shot dead by the superintendent of the zoo. It is found astray near the zoo and is mistaken as a mad dog. Ramu, out of his desperation accosts the superintendent who admits that Moti was not mad and shot dead by mistake. Ramu is disgruntled at the superintendent's explanation who tries to give him a rupee as the compensation, without understanding his emotions towards the dog. The insensitivity of the elders is in contrast to Ramu's deep love for Moti. Neither his master and mother, nor the superintendent can gauge his feelings. His mother mourns the death of the dog on account of monetary loss of three rupees monthly. Another aspect that the story exposes is untouchability and marginalization of the lower classes. Ramu being an untouchable is hired as the dog's patron for the paltry sum of three rupees a month. He is denied education, as he is destined to sweep the house and do other menial works that are "fit only for untouchables". (p.198)

In short, *Phoenix Fled* in contrast to *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, is not autobiographical, rather it presents various facets of human life. Except for a few

stories, the narrator is omniscient third person and sheds light on the lives of characters cutting across the lines of religion, class and gender. Attia Hosain minutely probes the human psyche. Anita Desai in her introduction to the 1988 edition of *Phoenix Fled*, views Attia Hosain's novel and short stories as "monuments to the past: the history of north India before partition".[49] Aamer Hussein views the stories as "a celebration of and, a lament for the author's undivided country. She articulates its contradictions—wealth and despair, conservatism and accelerating change, past and independent future. Hope and horror mingle in her vision".[50] The readers come across a shared culture of Hindu-Muslim communities. One can easily catch a glimpse of feudalism, its diktats, and its traditions. The stories deal with the characters from both urban and rural underprivileged classes. The characters posit their eccentricities. They are fatalistic and hold their fate (kismet) responsible for their predicament. The concept of sharam (modesty) and izzat (honour) is deeply rooted in them.

Attia Hosain's approach regarding women's marginalization is much ahead of her time. The feminist experiences of Laila in the novel, are not upshots of any western feminist theory, rather these are the quotidian experiences, as Attia Hosain has witnessed during her stay in India. Attia Hosain's critique of andocentric practices is directed to the new patriarchal roles entailed on women in the changing world. Women's liberation and education is a mere façade as beneath the emancipatory project lies the patriarchal manoeuvering to present women as fit companions of men in order to emulate their western counterparts. Characters like Sita, Nadira, and Romana are educated in order to fulfill the new

patriarchal roles. Women still remain markers of patriarchal culture. The transformation of conservative characters into the 'modern' ones is also not to exempt them from the conformity to patriarchal system. Their religiosity and modernity are at the disposal of patriarchy. Aunt Saira's reverting to the traditional role of a widow is also at the behest of patriarchy. Laila and Nandi are the two characters who do not conform to the patriarchy. Laila's marriage to Ameer and Nandi's rejection of her old husband and her subsequent illicit sexual union with a young man are to assert their individuality and feminine identity free from the constraints of the patriarchy. Though Nandi has transcended moral code of conduct in order to have a child, her sexual deviance is attributed to the patriarchal oppression as her old husband is not able to impregnate her. Nandi's sexual deviance is analogous to Hasina's sexual exploits in *The Street of the Moon,* but Hasina eventually falls prey to the worst type of exploitation in the form of prostitution and is reduced merely to a sexual object.

Attia Hosain hits hard at misogynistic practices, prevalent in society to preserve honour and modesty. The notions of honour and modesty encumber the lives of women and prove to be critical for them as conspicuous in Aunt Abida's miscarriage and death of Nandi's mother in child birth.

Attia Hosain indicates that by just pushing women out of domestic boundaries does not provide freedom for women, instead mental incarceration of women should be eradicated in order to ameliorate them. Despite her stay in England, Attia's roots are indigenous. She rejects the blind imitation of the west

for the sake of women's emancipation, and shows an association of colonialism, feudalism and patriarchy that suppress women. She does not bind herself in any particular ideology in depicting women's oppression. Notwithstanding her proximity with the Progressives, she rejects the leftist influence in her writings. Her works meticulously present the experiences of women's marginalization as well as delineate the socio-political events of early twentieth century. These events displaced the cultural equilibrium of the old feudal society. The social and political elites sought to create cultural harmony through nationalistic discourse. The progressive younger generation assimilated and homogenized themselves into secularization where mutual needs were negotiated.

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Chapter-Four

"Exercises in Anglophilia"

Arundhati Roy

The God of Small Things

Suzanna Arundhati Roy is the 'first home grown Indian' [1] who was awarded the Booker Prize for her debut novel *The God of Small Things*. She was born in Shillong, Meghalaya on November 24, 1961. Her mother Mary Roy, a Keralite Christian, married a Bengali Hindu planter. Born of a hybrid marriage; Arundhati Roy was subjected to displacement due to the split between her parents. As a result, she had to return to Ayemenem with her mother. At the age of seven, she attended her mother's informal 'Corpus Christi' School. Mary Roy played a crucial role in changing the laws of inheritance of the Christian women in Kerala.

Arundhati Roy got impetus from her mother to combat the rotten systems of society, as she left her house in order to prove herself a maverick. Arundhati Roy's life exemplifies her maverick as well as struggling attitude as she willfully left home on her own and sold empty beer bottles to pay for her studies. She lived in a camp at Feroz Shah Kotla, Delhi. At Delhi School of Architecture Roy met Gerard Da Cunha, a fellow student and married him. Both of them did not have interest in architecture, so they relinquished their professions and went off to Goa. They opted for making cakes and selling them on the beach. Roy's marital life with Gerard could not continue and she divorced him and returned to Delhi. She got a job at the National Institute of Urban Affairs. She hired a *barsati* (tarpaulin) near the *dargah* at Nizamuddin. She also hired a bicycle. In a chance encounter, Pridip Krishen offered her a brief role of a tribal girl in the film *'Massey Saab'*.[2] Arundhati Roy accepted the role hesitantly. Later, she married Pradip Krishen. During this time she got a scholarship to study the restoration of monuments in

Italy. After returning from Italy, Roy actively joined her husband to test her future in writing the script of screen plays and T.V. films. She wrote the script of *In Which Annie Gives It to Those Ones* and *Electric Moon*. She got media attention for her support of Phoolan Devi. This aroused controversy with Shekhar Kapoor. The controversy escalated into a court case. After that Arundhuti Roy relinquished public arena and concentrated on *The God of Small Things* that was published in April, 1997. After six months the novel achieved a great success as it was awarded the prestigious Booker Prize. Roy became the first Indian woman to achieve this honour.

Roy's novel brought her fame as well as notoriety for its anti-communist approach. Roy has been leveled the charges of anti communism and obscenity. E. M. S. Namboodripad, the then chief minister of Kerala slammed Roy for obscenity. He criticized Roy for her stance that sexual anarchy was not a social evil but the mark of a revolutionary spirit. He added, "I was not depicted having such a revolutionary spirit."[3]

In the following years Roy switched her attention from political writings to various important issues in India. In September 1998 her article *The End of Imagination* appeared in *The Nation* to criticize Indian government for the test of nuclear weapons. She was concomitant to Narmada Bachao Andolan. Her article, *The Greater Common Good* condemned Narmada Dam Project for the dispossession of millions of people from their homes. In January, 2000 she was arrested during the protest in the valley. Roy's altruistic vision is visible in the following statement:

> Roy's concern for the environment and for the people inhabiting it permeates her life; the social conscience that she exhibits may be read into the literature that she produces as a concrete embodiment of this concern.[4]

In an interview, when asked of her attitude to women and the untouchables in India, Roy plainly says:

> I never set out with the intention to write about it. I think one of the saddest things that's happening to literature is that it's getting over-simplified by this diet of simple political ideas. Some writers like to boil down headlines of liberal newspapers into fiction, so they say there shouldn't be communal riots, everybody should love each other, there shouldn't be boundaries or fundamentalism. But I think literature is more than that, these are political views which most of us hold anyway. It's very clear what I think about the world in my book, that's who I am, I don't need to use a political billboard saying women are oppressed. I think it comes out in the writing. [5]

In the novel Roy uses some autobiographical elements. The character of Ammu is delineated on the marital discord between her parents whereas Rahel's character presents the stigma faced by Roy herself as a child. She admits:

> I grew up in Kerala and a lot of the atmosphere of *The God of Small Things* is based on my experiences of what it was like there. Most interestingly, it was the only place in the world where religions coincide, there's Christianity, Hinduism, Marxism and Islam and they all live together and rub each other down. When I grew up it was the Marxism that was very strong, it was like the revolution was coming next week. I was aware of the cultures when I was growing up and I'm still aware of them now. When you see all the competing beliefs against the same background you realise how they all wear each other down. To me I couldn't think of a better location for a book about human beings.[6]

Roy has presented an innovative narrative technique in the novel. The story is told by an intrusive third person narrator ostensibly, but behind the third person the reader can sense the perception of Rahel.[7]

The novel starts with the advent of Rahel to Ayemenem, a small village in Kerala. She returns after a long time to meet her twin brother Esthappen. The twins are attributed as "a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate but with joint identities" (p.2). The plot of the novel is constructed on the basis of continuous time shift. At the outset of the novel, the twins are shown at the age of thirty-one, of the same age at which Ammu, their mother had died.

> Not old.
> Not young.
> But a viable die-able age. (p.3)

The readers are informed about the birth of the twins and their parents' divorce. Ammu returns to Ayemenem as an unwelcome intruder. The staunch enemy in her father's house is Baby Kochamma, sister of Ammu's father. Ammu's misery reaches its zenith when she is drawn into sexual relations with Velutha, the untouchable. Velutha is murdered by the police for his offence of mating with a 'touchable' woman and Ammu is ousted from the house. Her little family disintegrates as Estha is sent to his Baba and Rahel remains with the Ayemenem family.

Roy has presented "three generations of men and women."[8] Mammachi is the representative of that generation of women who have always been silent sufferers of male atrocities. Baby Kochamma and Father Mulligan are the representatives of the generation born in pre-independence India; Baby Kochamma falls in love with Father Mulligan but cannot flout patriarchal norms blatantly and becomes a victim of patriarchy as she is destined to lead a life of

spinsterhood fulfilling the patriarchal role of a pure, sexless woman. Margaret Kochamma and Ammu represent that generation of women who defy the patriarchy overtly but suffer for the offence in the form of failed marriages. Rahel is the representative of liberated women who do not capitulate to any social and religious norms and boundaries. She even trespasses the limits by having an incestuous relationship with her twin brother. Rahel is presented as a liberated woman, free from the shackles of patriarchy. Through the character of Rahel, Roy presents the woman who overtly challenges the patriarchy and patriarchal niche for woman.

Rahel's arrival to Ayemenem has a tacit analogy with the rain. It is raining when Rahel returns to Ayemenem .The rain may be symbolic of overwhelming emotions. Her inability to combat the spate of disorientation is highlighted in the appalling incest. This rain may also be construed as positive, as in its aftermath, the burden of guilt resulting from the murder of Velutha is washed out. Rahel comes to reconstitute the official version of history, to convince Estha that what he had done as a child, was not his own volition, but he was a mere pawn of the patriarchy. Rahel returns to Ayemenem with the memories of "the small things", such as "memory of waking up one night giggling at Estha's funny dream [...] the Orange drink Lemon drink Man,...the taste of the tomato sandwiches—Estha's sandwiches, that Estha ate–on the Madras Mail to Madras."(pp.2-3) The narrator's comment upon Rahel's memories of small things is ironic. The terrible incidents of her childhood are of no significance to the perpetrators of tragedy who played

havoc in her life. At the inception of the novel, Sophie Mol's funeral is symbolic of impending doom in the form of social death of Rahel, Estha and Ammu.

As a seven years old girl, she could not understand the events that created metamorphosis in her life, but now at the age of thirty-one, she is able to rummage every nook and corner of her childhood memories. As an adult she can remember the sharp, smoky stink of old urine at Kottayam Police Station, and also the nasty attitude of Inspector Thomas Matthew towards Ammu. Now she has a hindsight to understand the meaning of *veshya* and illegitimate.

Rahel's life is haunted by the loss of Sophie Mol, though she was marginalized prior to Sophie Mol's advent to Ayemenem but the worst things happened after Sophie Mol's arrival. She confronts the harsh reality of her marginalized status in the family at Cochin airport, Sophie Mol's question to the twins about the twins' father can be interpreted as Sophie Mol's inadvertent effort to make the twins realize their inferior status in the family.

> 'Where's your dad? Sophie Mol wanted to know.
>
> 'He's ...'and Rahel looked at Estha for help.
>
> '....not here.' Estha said.
>
> 'Shall I tell you my list?' Rahel asked Sophie Mol.
>
> Rahel's 'list' was an attempt to order chaos. She revised it constantly, torn between love and duty. It was by no means a true gauge of her feelings. (p.151)

Moreover the narrator's comment upon Rahel's list of beloveds in the family signifies Rahel's dilemma. Even as a child she had a split personality. She wants to belong to Ipe family but her hybridism haunts her, as she is not considered a Syrian Christian. The narrator comments that the death of Sophie

Mol becomes a haunting experience for Rahel. "It ushered Rahel through childhood (from school to school) into womanhood." (p.16) Actually Sophie Mol's death results in the exposure of Rahel's marginalization. However she has always been a victim of the patriarchy. Her plight at Nazareth Convent is also an outcome of the patriarchal domination over religion. The mischievous, childish activities of Rahel are tantamount to moral depravity, according to the convent schoolteachers. Rahel's unsavoury past haunts her and she loses the zest for life. She grows up unnoticed, unsupervised "without anybody to arrange a marriage for her. Without anybody who would pay her a dowry." (p.17) The narrator's comment upon Rahel's volition of Larry McCaslin as her husband presents a similarity between Ammu and Rahel. Like Ammu she gets married to Larry McCaslin, out of compulsion: "Rahel drifts into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge. With a Sitting Down sense. She returned with him to Boston." (p.18)

Rahel's traumatic past troubles her as she suffers from a sense of alienation with her husband. When her husband makes love, her eyes that evince a lack of intimacy that offends him.

> He held her as though she was a gift. Given to him in love.
> Something still and small. Unbearably precious.
> But when they made love he was offended by her eyes.
> They behaved as though they belonged to someone else.
> Someone watching. Looking out of the window at the sea.
> At a boat in the river. Or a passer-by in the mist in a hat.
> (p.19)

Larry takes the alienation of Rahel's eyes as indifferent or despair. But the look of her eyes has never been despair. It is "a sort of optimism" (p.19), an optimism to revive Estha's memory. Rahel returns with the sordid experiences of America. She remains in constant search for identity as whenever she thinks of her home during her stay in America, the idea of home comes to her "always in the colours of the dark oiled wood of boats, and the empty cores of the tongues of flames that flickered in brass lamps." (p.73) She returns from America to set the things right, to order the disarray in the lives of Estha and herself. Her reading of Wisdom Exercise Notebooks is an attempt to rummage some pleasant moments of childhood from the debris of abysmal past.

Comrade Pillai's curious enquiries about Rahel's husband and issues demonstrate the patriarchal patterns that are deeply embedded in society. His shocked utterance of 'Die-vorced?' symbolizes his patriarchal outlook. Divorce in patriarchal society is symbolic of death for women.

> 'We're divorced'. Rahel hoped to shock him into silence.
>
> 'Die-vorced?'His voice rose to such a high register that it cracked on the question mark. He even pronounced the word as though it were a form of death. (p.130)

The continuous suppression of Rahel compels her to commit the most heinous act. She establishes an incestuous relation with Estha. The incestuous relationship is in defiance of social, religious and moral laws. The incestuous relationship is interpreted as a cognizant transgression to shatter the ethical and moral code of conduct. Having undergone the undeserved miseries for their 'crimes' of being an

issue of inter-caste marriage, the twins are averse to conform to any kind of social laws. Moreover they have witnessed the severe punishment meted out to Ammu and Velutha that was "disproportionate"[9] to their crime. Marginalization of Rahel along with Estha's removal from the house filled in the twins a sense of rebellion. Now they are ready to suffer the punishment of any height. Aida Balvannandhan presents a logical implication of the incest between the twins. Both of them have a queer attachment that is far from the erotic implications. The act is an attempt "of the twins rejoining after years of separation."[10] The readers are informed about their joint identities: "Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as Me, and separately, individually, as We or Us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities."(p.2)

The proximity between the twins is described in the following terms.

> That the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other. That the two things fitted together. Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lovers' bodies. (p.20)
>
> There are things that you can't do–like writing letters to a part of yourself. To your feet or hair. Or heart. (pp.163-164)

The incestuous relationship between the twins is not to enjoy erotic desires but is Rahel's attempt to eliminate guilt from Estha's memories, an attempt to cleanse Estha's mind:

> Only that there were tears. Only that Quietness and emptiness fitted together like stacked spoons. Only that there was a snuffling in the hollows at the base of a lovely throat. Only that a hard honey-coloured shoulder had a semi circle of teeth marks on it. Only that they held each other close, long after it was over. Only that what they shared that night was not happiness, but hideous grief. (p.328)

Rahel's enquiry from Chacko whether he loves Sophie Mol more than Rahel herself, evinces that the twins are in constant search of a father figure in their childhood. Chacko replies in his reading aloud voice that, "Anything's possible in Human Nature...Love. Madness. Hope. Infinite joy." (p.118)

In her conversation with Chacko, Rahel thinks that of the four things told by Chacko, "*Infinnate joy* sounded the saddest. Perhaps because of the way Chacko said it." This line is highly symbolic as the tragedy in the lives of the twins is heightened only after the *infinnate joy* felt by Ammu and Velutha in their sexual union. The plight of the twins can be easily gauged by the situation. Joy and happiness become alien and menacing terms for the twins.

> *Infinnate joy.* With a church sound to it. Like a sad fish with fins all over.
>
> A cold moth lifted a cold leg.
>
> The cigarette smoke curled into the night. And the fat man and the little girl lay awake in silence. (p.118)

The phrase "infinite joy" is concomitant with the church sound that symbolizes the churchyard or the graveyard making the theme of death conspicuous. Pappachi's moth is presented simultaneously and it also symbolizes the miseries in the lives of the twins and Ammu. Ammu has to pay a heavy toll for the infinite joy she has felt in her union with Velutha. Ammu is denied burial in the graveyard by the church and Velutha's body is dumped in pauper's pit. The twins' vulnerable situation makes them live in eternal fear. Ammu's anger, wrecked on the twins at Cochin Airport indicates her insecurities in a hostile society.

> Chacko said to Ammu in Malyalam, 'Please. Later. Not now.'
>
> And Ammu's angry eyes on Estha said, *All right. Later.*
>
> And Later became a horrible, menacing, goosebumpy word.
>
> Lay. Ter.
>
> Like a deep sounding bell in a mossy well. Shivery and furred. Like moth's feet. (pp.145-146)

The character of Estha is analyzed along with Rahel's as both of them face the same ostracism. Even at the age of seven, the twins are mature enough to realize their subordinate and marginalized status in the house. "While other children of their age learned other things, Estha and Rahel learned how history negotiates its term and collects its dues from those who break its laws." (p.55)

The twins live their life with existential fear and the question of identity. The plight of the twins is well depicted by the narrator.

> A pair of actors trapped in a recondite play with no hint of plot or narrative. Stumbling through their parts, nursing someone else's sorrow. Grieving someone else's grief.
>
> Unable somehow to, change plays. Or purchase, for a fee, some cheap brand of exorcism from a counselor with a fancy degree, who would sit them down and say, in one of many ways: [...]You are the victims not the perpetrators'. (p.191)

Life, for Estha and Rahel is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. They are thrown into a meaningless universe. The metaphor of "an imaginary orange" that is held in their Sticky Other hands (p.191) symbolizes the stigma of their hybridity. The imaginary orange may be symbolic of the encumbrance of their squalid past: "There was nowhere to lay it down .It wasn't theirs to give away. It would have to be held. Carefully and forever." (p.191)

At the inception of the novel Estha is "barely awake" (p.5) in sharp contrast to Rahel who is "wide awake, fiercely vigilant." (p.5) Estha's condition foreshadows his aphasia in the due course of the time. The metaphor of "A quiet bubble floating on a sea of noise" (p.11) rightly depicts the hollowness of Estha's life. For him, happiness is like a bubble. Like Rahel, Estha's childhood experiences haunt him, as he becomes "Unspeakable. Numb." (p.12) His encounter with Orange drink Lemon drink man indicates his susceptible position in society. It instills in him a sense of guilt, fear and distrust towards the elders. During the performance of *Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol*, Estha undergoes the trauma of marginalization. The thoughts of Orangedrink Lemondrink man obsess him as he thinks that the Orangedrink Lemondrink man will chase him. In order to seek refuge from the hostile society, Estha opts for the loneliness of the pickle factory. His loneliness portends his alienation from rest of the world. His solitude in the pickle factory is akin to Rahel's hiding in the dirty Airport curtain. The atmosphere of the refuge, be it the pickle factory or the curtain, is not favourable for the twins, but their volition signifies their inferior status in the society. What troubles him the most, is a sense of guilt to be the perpetrator of Velutha's murder. The quietness signifies the memories of his unsavoury past that trouble him and snatches the capability of speech from him.

> Once the quietness arrived, it stayed and spread in Estha. It reached out of his head and enfolded him in its swampy arms. It rocked him to the rhythm of an ancient, foetal heart beat. [...] He grew accustomed to the uneasy octopus that lived inside him and squirted its inky tranquilizer on his past. Gradually the reason for his silence was hidden away, entombed somewhere deep in the soothing folds of the fact of it. (pp.11-12)

Estha's obsessive cleanliness denotes that he wants to wash the stains from his childhood memories as the narrator comments that this obsession is the "only positive sign of volition" (p.91) in the personality of Estha after he has lost his speech.

Along with the patriarchy and casteism, Roy discusses hybridity as a major issue in Indian patriarchal social structure. Estha and Rahel suffer a long misery for their hybrid roots. Ammu's inter-religious marriage becomes the albatross round the neck for the twins. The twins are marginalized and neglected for their hybrid roots. But the double standard of hybridity is applied to Sophie Mol's superior status in Ayemenem house. Sophie Mol is also an offspring of inter-caste marriage, but the inmates of Ayemenem House welcome her. The same precept of Manu is applied in the case of Sophie Mol, as she is the daughter of Chacko, who gets married to Margaret Kochamma, a British lady. Estha, a seven year old child is well aware of his status in the family, he is aware of the fact that being the off springs of an inter-religious marriage, the twins are at the periphery and have no claim for the equal treatment. From the beginning of the novel, at the burial of Sophie Mol, Ammu and her twins are depicted as alienated figures. Their alienation, depicted in the first chapter, foreshadows their plight in the course of event. This alienation is not limited to the twins; Sophie Mol also becomes the victim of her hybrid roots in death. She is buried in a child-sized coffin, detached from rest of the world.

> Even the children pay for their parents' illusions of successfully transgressing the existent divisions, between

> 'race' (black and white) as in the case of Margaret Kochamma and Chacko; of religion and community as in the case of Ammu and her husband .The consequences are that the twins lives are shattered and Sophie Mol dies a violent death.[11]

Baby Kochamma's seedy view of twins' hybrid roots plays a major role in the plight of the twins. She designs the culmination of tragedy in the lives of Ammu and her twins by ousting Ammu and Estha from Ayemenem House.

> In the way that the unfortunate sometimes disliked the co-unfortunate, Baby Kochamma disliked the twins, for she considered them doomed fatherless waifs. Worse still, they were Half Hindu Hybrids whom no self respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry. (p.45)

Baby Kochamma's hostility towards the twins is the *raison detre* for their plight. Her sadistic outlook towards Ammu and her twins is the outcome of her sexual envy for Ammu. Baby Kochamma herself has been victimized by the patriarchy, but she takes her "unconsummated love for Father Mulligan" (p.45) and its consequent adverse effect in her life as her destiny. Baby Kochamma is presented as a tool wielded by the patriarchy to subordinate women.

> She subscribed wholeheartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parents' home [...] As for a divorced daughter from a intercommunity love marriage—Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (pp.45-46)

Baby Kochamma's abhorrence of Ammu becomes intensified when she comes to know about Ammu's sexual union with Velutha. Her disgust for their relationship is also an outcome of her contempt for the hybridity. Ammu's sexual union with Velutha may result in another hybrid child, a child born from the union

of a touchable woman and an untouchable man will annihilate the long preserved purity of breeding among the high caste families. This miscegenation is considered to be detrimental to the social hierarchy, not only detrimental but also a reprehensible act by the man made religious laws, as described in Manu's precepts. Thus Baby Kochamma justifies Velutha's brutal murder in the following words, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap". (p.31) Velutha's murder is considered by Baby Kochamma as a divine dispensation for transgressing the Love Laws designed by the patriarchal community leaders. The sexual union can be interpreted as a volition of Ammu and Velutha to violate the Love Laws, "who should be loved, and how. And how much" (p.33) to defy an oppressive system. The narrator in the following words describes Velutha's transgression, "More than touched. Entered. Loved."(p.78) Since Ammu belongs to a high-class family, her feminine body is considered to be purged by the touch of an untouchable. Roy slams man made religious laws for the plight of issues born of hybrid roots. The lyrical description of love making scene of Velutha and Ammu can be interpreted as a mockery of such laws, Ammu establishes sexual relations with Velutha out of her biological needs that are repressed by the patriarchy on the basis of an age old assumption of a pure sexless widow or divorcee.

Right from the beginning, patriarchy is responsible for Ammu's rebellion and her consequent plight. She was brought up under the supervision of her father Pappachi, "a monstrous suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning" (p.180). Since her childhood she has been witnessing the brutal, inhuman face of the patriarchy. She is subjected to regular beatings by her father. In a state of utter

neglect, somehow she sustains, and could not get proper education due to her father's insular outlook towards the women folk. Pappachi's view regarding higher education for women is an emblem of gender based education system constructed by the patriarchy. Conversly Chacko has the privilege of an Oxford education. Her father did not bother about her marriage even though she turned eighteen which was considered the perfect marriageable age by the patriarchy. "Her eighteenth birthday came and went. Unnoticed, or at least unremarked upon by her parents". (p.38)

Ammu constantly worries about her future, hatching plans to seek refuge from her ill-tempered father. Fortunately or unfortunately, one of Ammu's plans to get rid of her father's torment works as Pappachi agrees to send her to Calcutta to spend the summer with a distant aunt. For Ammu, leaving Ayemenem house is jumping from the frying pan into the fire. She willy-nilly falls in love with a Hindu Bengali youth.

> Ammu did'nt pretend to be in love with him. She just weighed the odds and accepted .She thought that *anything,* anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem. She wrote to her parents informing them of her decision. They did'nt reply. (p.39)

Ammu's dreams of a better future are shattered as her husband turns out to be a drunkard. Escaping from Pappachi's brutal treatment, now Ammu is subjected to the beatings of her drunken husband. Ammu tolerantly suffers drunken violence of her husband as her destiny. Her husband proves to be a man sans the ability to work. His continuous absence from the tea estate and incapability to work leads to his imminent dismissal by his manager Mr. Hollick, who covets Ammu's beauty

and wants to have sexual relation with her as a compensation for withdrawing her husband's dismissal. Ammu has to leave her husband due to his "drunken violence...and post drunken badgering" (p.42) to establish sexual relation with Mr. Hollick. Ammu returns to Ayemenem house with "two young children. And no more dreams."(p.42)

Ammu's miseries do not end here, as she and her twins are treated as unwanted and unwelcome infiltrators. Ammu's world has now shrunk to Ayemenem house.

> For herself she knew that there would be no more chances. There was only Ayemenem now. A front verandah and a back verandah. A hot river and a pickle factory.
>
> And in the background, the constant, high, whinning mewl of local disapproval. (p.43)

The "local disapproval" stands for the societal attitude towards a divorcee. For Ammu marriage proves to be the gallows, an enclosure and an absurd institution in which she becomes the victim of her husband's atrocities. Contrary to Ammu's plight her husband remarries and leads a life of conjugal bliss, free from the responsibilities of the twins. He sends Estha back to Ayemenem when he loses his speech. Here Ammu is presented as a mouthpiece of Arundhati Roy, who does not reject institution of marriage altogether in Indian cultural context. Ammu's miseries continue and she becomes the victim of economic exploitation by Chacko as being a woman she is not entitled to any kind of share in the property. Even her hard work in the pickle factory remains unrecognized. Chacko's comment that Ammu has no locusts stand I (*locus standi*) is an allusion to the rights of inheritance for women in Kerala. Mary Roy, mother of Arundhati

Roy fought for the legal rights of women in Kerala. Chacko's remark can also be interpreted as his attempt to make Ammu and her twins realize that they are living in Ayemenem house on sufferance and have no legal rights to live there. Constant neglect and isolation on familial and social level leads Ammu to "become restless and untamed." (p.44) Her biological needs compel her to search for a man to share her hidden grief. She throws the morality imposed by the patriarchal social structure to the wind. Ammu's rage to annihilate the repressive social structure is compared to the reckless rage of a suicide bomber. Roy has rightly compared Ammu to a suicide bomber as Ammu is wary of the destructive consequences of her sexual relations with Velutha. Ammu's sexual union with Velutha can also be interpreted as a deliberate infringement of patriarchal rules than an outcome of her biological needs. As far as sexual union with a touchable is concerned, it could have been a less serious crime. Ammu's wrath towards her plight and continuous isolation prompts her to change her walk "from a safe mother walk to a wilder sort of walk."(p.44) The 'unmixable mix' that is "the infinite tenderness of motherhood and reckless rage of a suicide bomber."(p.44) are the characteristics that rightly depict the dilemma and predicament of a divorcee in an antagonistic society:

> Roy leaves it to the readers to decide whether this unmixable mix refers to her sensuality which Velutha arouses or to urge her to overthrow norms of propriety which a smug and hardbound society has made for women.[12]

The sudden change in Ammu's behaviour remains unnoticed by the family.

> On days like this, there was something restless and untamed about her. As though she had temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorcehood.[...]She wore

> flowers in her hair and carried magic in her eyes...She smoke cigarettes and had midnight swims. (p.44)

Constant oppression by the patriarchy fills in her an aversion towards the men folk and zeal to eliminate men folk as she symbolically eliminates the name of her husband from the memory of her children. She shows them his photograph only once in her life. Ammu's disapproval of Estha's imitation of his father's habits is also symbolic of Ammu's attempt to create amnesia. Ammu's hesitation in giving a surname to her children either of her husband or her father also symbolizes Ammu's quest for identity in a patriarchal society. Ammu unconsciously lays the foundation for her twins' rootlessness by not giving them any surname, as conspicuous by Estha's Wisdom Exercise Note Book where Estha writes his name Estha Unknown. Ammu's hesitation in adopting the surname and her attempt to erase the memory of her husband from the minds of her twins can be termed as an "unconscious matriarchal struggle for social position and for power". [13] Ammu's continuous suppression by the patriarchy filled her with repugnance towards the men folk as she is compelled to say that Estha will grow up to be a "male chauvinist pig".

Ammu's insult by Inspector Mathew is an instance of repressive state apparatus to marginalize women and untouchables. The police snub Ammu in front of her own children. Inspector Thomas Mathew's remark implies Ammu's future position after her sexual relations with Velutha. The contempt of Inspector Thomas Mathew can be construed as a paradox "intended to preserve the status quo and the illusion of her sacred status".[14] According to Manu's precept, Ammu has lost her exalted social position after having sex with Velutha and has become

an outcaste like the prostitutes. The insult meted out by the police becomes a nightmarish experience as she is haunted by a dream in which a policeman approaches her with a snicking scissors to hack off her hair: "They did that in Kottayam to prostitutes whom they'd caught in the bazaar—branded them so that everybody would know them for what they were. *Veshyas*."(p.161)

Ammu's incarceration by her family members after her sexual relations become known is symbolic of women's marginalization to the realm of the household in order to maintain pseudo morality and preserve their chastity.

As far as Ammu's role in the tragedy is concerned, she is also not flawless as in the moments of desperation and distraction at being compelled to espouse the single role of a pure, sexless divorcee, she fiercely rejects her twins. Her rejection of the twins, leads them to leave the house as a repercussion of the rejection of elders who created the tragedy. Secondly, Ammu's refusal to give Estha a surname, results in cultural displacement and rootlessness in a world that is hostile to hybrid children: "Estha occupied very little space in the world." (p.11)

In the strict Brahmin precept Ammu's death can be interpreted as divine dispensation for her sins of breaching moral code of conduct but her tragic death is evidence that in a rigid patriarchal society, women demanding sexual, financial and social freedom cannot survive. Ammu's death in loneliness in a cheap lodge is compared to the death of a sparrow: "A sparrow lay dead on the back seat ...She died on the back seat, with her legs in the air. Like a joke."(p.296)

In a tacit analogy Ammu is compared to sparrow. Ammu's death is an outcome of her non-conformity to the patriarchal rules imposed upon her.

> Ammu's death is more than fate playing a nasty joke on her. It is the direct result of her having crossed the limits imposed by her community. Her act is the negation of generations of her family's conforming to the rules imposed to live in an organized group. [15]

Ammu's dead body is also compared to a dead cockroach. Ammu's death remains as unnoticed as that of lowly insect. Chacko wraps Ammu's body in a dirty bed sheet and transports it to the electric crematorium as the church refuses to bury her.

Ammu is incinerated in a crematorium where "Nobody except beggars, derelicts and police custody dead were cremated."(p.162) Ammu's incineration is symbolic of the elimination of her identity and existence from the world. The receipt, given by the In-Charge of the crematorium, is also symbolic of the loss of identity. Ammu's identity now has been reduced to a receipt. The Church operates as a repressive state apparatus to subjugate women and untouchables. As in life, Ammu is denied dignity even in death. Chacko's self consciousness as the brother of a divorced, defiant and fallen sister supercedes his filial bonds.

> Ammu is even physically erased as she is incinerated and in fact even the receipt that Rahel collects from the crematorium does not ascertain that the corresponding jar does indeed contain her mother's ashes, symbolically paralleling the extent to which the traditional society will go to obliterate a woman who has not respected the rules.[16]

Ammu's defiance of patriarchal rules may also be construed as "rejection of male authority of the female body".[17] Female body has been presumed as an estate owned by man. It should be protected from any kind of contamination. Conversely feminists have claimed the female body as an independent entity, free from the fetters of patriarchal imposition. Ammu's marriage with a Hindu Bengali

and her subsequent denial of establishing sexual relations with Mr. Hollick is a proclamation of owning her body. The narrator also highlights Ammu's endeavours to own her body when she is disturbed by her twins hanging to her body. She shrugs them off as "She wanted her body back. It was her body."(p.222)

Ammu identifies herself with Velutha when he is participating in the Communist demonstration. Ammu's reprimanding of Rahel is an evidence that Ammu has realized an emotional proximity with Velutha on the basis of same exploitation faced by both of them. Ammu is wary of the vulnerable state of Velutha and herself, that is why she protects him from the wrath of the ruling class. The reason of Ammu's identification with Velutha is that she is in search of a fellow revolutionary among the mute sufferers and collaborators of an exploitative system. Ammu finds a rebel in the form of Velutha: "She hoped that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness, he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against." (p.176)

By scolding her twins, Ammu tries to suppress the feelings aroused in her heart for Velutha. She is aware that she is from a "touchable" family and any kind of affair with an untouchable will create havoc and Velutha will have to suffer. By negating Velutha's existence, Ammu tries to erase him from her heart, but she is compelled by her biological needs. The word "tomorrow" spoken by Ammu at the end of the novel, suggests that Ammu hoped to lead a liberated life, free from the shackles of caste and religious prejudices. This word "tomorrow" represents Ammu's utopia. She had hopes for a future not destined to be hers.

The description of Ammu's last visit to Rahel is extremely touching and shows Ammu's optimism despite her deteriorating health. Ammu's presents to Rahel and Estha show her will to grip the time in her fist, but the time slips from her fist like sand. Ammu's conversation with Rahel presents her will and hope to reintegrate her little family and to lead a life, free from the fetters of patriarchy. Ammu's comment that "she had a choice was a great privilege" (p.160) is sarcastic; a woman in a patriarchal society can have a choice only in her imagination. Ammu's life is like a long incorrect sentence written by fate, cannot be punctuated by her. The narrator comments: "Little Ammu. Who never completed her corrections." (p.159)

It is Velutha, through whom Roy discusses untouchability, one of the key issues of the novel. He is the only male character, presented with positive traits and multifaceted personality. He works as a carpenter in the pickle factory of Mammachi. Roy depicts the social as well as economic exploitation of the untouchables through the character of Velutha. Despite his extraordinary potential, he is not entitled to work as a carpenter as the untouchables are not supposed to be carpenters. Mammachi hires him but pays him less than she pays a touchable carpenter, but more than a Paravan. Mammachi's reminiscences about the plight of untouchables rightly illustrate the predicament of the untouchables. The advent of British did not alleviate the distress of the untouchables. Even their condition was exacerbated by their conversion to Christianity in order to escape the blight of untouchability. After the independence of India, their conversion to Christianity becomes a set back as "...they were not entitled to any Government benefits like

job reservations or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper they were Christians, and therefore casteless."(p.74)

The title *The God Of Small Things* is ironic and presents the predicament of untouchables as Velutha is compared to God. He has a magical power to carve intricate things but he is not able to carve a better future for himself.

Velutha represents that section of untouchables who bears the stigma of untouchability and envisions the redressal from the Marxist Government. Vellya Paapen, father of Velutha belongs to that section of untouchables which has witnessed the "Crawling Backward Days". He is well aware of the ethos of a caste ridden society and knows how deeply embedded untouchability is. For him, the obligations, Ipe family has bestowed, are like the boon upon the untouchables, which they do not deserve. Velutha's qualities put Vellya Paapen in trepidation. He takes Velutha's qualities as a menace for his future.

The vision of leading a life free from the mortification of untouchability, prompts Velutha to join the Communist Party. But he is hardly aware that the same bourgeoisie that dominate society also dominate the Party. Velutha's nexus with the Communist Party becomes a tragic flaw for Velutha as Baby Kochamma holds him responsible for her insult during Marxist demonstration.

Velutha is like an oasis for Ammu and her twins as he is the sole personality who provides some happiness, though ephemeral, for them in the midst of continuous suppression. His affair with Ammu is interpreted as his emulation to the high caste but in his endeavours, he trespasses the limits, laid down by the patriarchy. In Ammu's dream Velutha appears as a one-armed man,

who is incapable of performing two things simultaneously: "He could do only one thing at a time. If he held her, he couldn't kiss her. If he kissed her, he couldn't see her. If he saw her, he couldn't feel her." (p.215)

The description of the dream is highly symbolic, as Velutha's physical deformity indicates his inferior status due to his untouchable caste. His incapability to do two things at a time shows his incapability to invert the oppressive system. The new blue bottles that are brought and shattered by the sea are the dreams of Ammu and Velutha. The blackness of the sea symbolizes the hostile atmosphere. The darkness of night is akin to the blackness of the sea. Velutha's elimination is also foreshadowed as, "He left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirror." (p.216)

The narrator gives the attribute of "The God of Loss", "The God of Small Things" to Velutha. He is the God of Loss as in his efforts to give happiness to Ammu and her twins; he has lost his right to live. The narrator's description of Ammu, "Like Polishing firewood"(p.44) in her wedding photograph and Velutha as "polished with high wax body polish" (p.215)has a proximity as it indicates the tragic fate, Ammu and Velutha meet for their offences of crossing the Rubicon, laid down by the patriarchy.

During his encounter with Mammachi, he lives in an illusion that things will get better automatically. He responds to the "crass, insufferable insult" (p.283) of Mammachi with a calm and confident disposition. He addresses himself as 'we' not 'I' as he has an illusion that he will be propped up by his Communist Cadre. But Comrade Pillai's antipathetical attitude disenchants him

from his mirage of social equality and casteless society. Having been denied the aegis, by Comrade Pillai, Velutha crosses the river in the hope that "*Things will get worse...Then better.*" *(p.290)* But Velutha's hopes prove futile as he is ferociously beaten to death by the police.

The character of Baby Kochamma has been depicted in negative colours. She is presented as a narcissist. Her pursuit for an Irish monk, Father Mulligan, results in her abnormality and sexual perversion. At the age of eighteen, she falls in love with an Irish monk, Father Mulligan, who comes to India to study Hindu scriptures in order to denounce them. Baby Kochamma's involvement prompts her to discard her ancestral faith. Her wish "to be with Father Mulligan. Close enough to smell his beard. To see the coarse weave of his cassock. To love him by just looking at him"(p.24) incites her to join a convent in Madras as a novice trainee. But her yearning remains unfulfilled as she realizes that her attempts to own Father Mulligan are inconsequential: "She found that Senior Sisters monopolized the priests and bishops with biblical doubts more sophisticated than hers would ever be." (pp.24-25)

The futility of her endeavours fills her with restlessness and she leaves the convent but insists on remaining a Roman Catholic for the rest of her life. Baby Kochamma suffers the patriarchal domination over religion as being an ex nun, she is destined to lead a life of a spinster. Her parents become insensitive towards her natural instincts and therefore become the suppressors of her sexuality. She is offered education as a substitute for marriage. Roy presents an age-old patriarchal notion towards that education is only for respectable, destitute women.

Despite her failure in the pursuit of Father Mulligan, she remains in love with him and makes routine entries in her diary, "I Love You, I Love You" for Father Mulligan. Baby Kochamma's strange love continues even after the death of Father Mulligan. The narrator describes the ferocity of Baby Kochamma's love for Father Mulligan. Father Mulligan's memories are "savagely. fiercely, hers." The narrator has presented an abnormality in the character of Baby Kochamma. Her obsession with T.V. and her neglect of the exotic garden can be interpreted as the end of her hope to own Father Mulligan. The narrator comments on her absurd imitation of western culture at the age of eighty three;

> *She's living her life backwards,* Rahel thought.
>
> It was a curiously apt observation. Baby Kochamma *had* lived her life backwards .As a young woman she had renounced the material world, and now as an old one, she seemed to embrace it. She hugged it and it hugged her back. (p.22)

Roy presents an irony in the character of Baby Kochamma. She wields religion to seduce the Irish monk but ironically religion prevents her from leading a fulfilled life. Aida Balvannandhan presents an interesting interpretation of Baby Kocahmma's sacrificed love in the analogy of the exotic garden. Her toil in the scorching heat to cultivate the exotic garden is her attempt to own Father Mulligan, an 'exotic monk'. Her disgust towards Ammu is due to Ammu's struggle with a miserable fate that Baby Kochamma has mutely capitulated to. Both Ammu and Baby Kochamma fall in love but Baby Kochamma's love is within the permissible limits whereas Ammu's love marriage and her later affair with Velutha are blatant violations of moral code of conduct prescribed by the patriarchy. Baby Kochamma adheres to the patriarchal rules and the patriarchal

niche for the women and demands the same respect and submission to the sacrosanct rules of the patriarchy that she has shown in her prime. Since she is a victim of patriarchal traditions, she wants a fellow sufferer in the form of Ammu.

> Baby Kochamma resented Ammu, because she saw her quarreling with a fate that she, Baby Kochamma herself, felt she had graciously accepted. The fate of the wretched Man-less woman. The sad, Father Mulligan-less Baby Kochamma. (p.45)

Baby Kochamma's possession of ancestral jewellery also symbolizes that one who adheres to the patriarchal subordination is rewarded, while the transgressor of the patriarchal boundaries like Ammu, has to suffer and meet a miserable fate.

Baby Kochamma's hatred towards "a particular Paravan smell" (p.257) that her niece exudes during her association with Velutha is an outcome of her repressed sexuality. Having denied access to an "Irish Jesuit smell" Baby Kochamma becomes jealous of Ammu for her sexual contentment.[18] She plays central role in the tragic death of Velutha. Assuming him to be the culprit behind her unfortunate experience during the Communist demonstration, Baby Kochamma avenges Velutha by eliminating him. She avails Mammachi's wrath as an opportunity and accosts the police with a false F.I.R. By implicating Velutha in the death of Sophie Mol, she performs her 'religious duty' to salvage the reputation of the family that is ruined by the affair of her 'touchable' niece with an untouchable. In the police station, Baby Kochamma asks for divine help in her 'sacred' task of eliminating an untouchable who has committed adultery and thus made 'God's own country' profane. She recites, *'Hail Mary full of grac... '* (p.315)

Roy denounces religion as a patriarchal construct and a tool wielded by the bourgeois to suppress the under privileged classes of society viz the untouchables and the women. When Baby Kochamma tells the children that the police have made a "lucky mistake" (p.317), she does not refer to Velutha's name. This is symbolic of the erasure of Velutha's existence. Estha's 'yes' to recognize Velutha as their abductor, according to Baby Kochamma is a "small price to pay" (p.318) for the twins.

The garden that she has raised is "fierce and bitter". (p.26) It is symbolic of her sadistic attitude. Her sadistic attitude is visible in her dealing with the twins.

> The twins are too young to understand all this, so Baby Kochamma grudged them their moments of high happiness when a dragonfly they'd caught lifted a small stone off their palms with its legs, or when they had permission to bathe the pigs, or they found an egg—hot from hen But most of them all, she grudged them the comfort they drew from each other. She expected from them some token unhappiness. At the very least. (p.46)

Her attitude remains unchanged even at the age of eighty three. She is delighted that Estha had not spoken to Rahel. Her narcissism is conspicuous during Sophie Mol's funeral where she wears an expensive sari.

Even Miss Mitten, Baby Kochamma's Austrailian friend is sadistic towards the twins. Like Baby Kochamma, she also sees dark aspects. Miss Mitten's approach towards the twins is very much similar to Baby Kochamma's as she is incapable of understanding the innocence of the twins. The twins' reading backward is not an amusing act for Miss Mitten. Her nasty outlook is apparent in her prophecy that she had seen Satan in their eyes. Miss Mitten's complaint to

Baby Kochamma incites her to punish the twins to write "In future we will not read backwards. In future we will not read backwards. A Hundred times forward."(p.60)

Miss Mitten's death proves to be 'hidden justice' or divine dispensation for the twins as the milk van that killed Miss Mitten was in reverse gear.

Mammachi has always been a victim of the patriarchy and still collaborates with it in the suppression of her own daughter. She is similar to Baby Kochamma in endorsing and capitulating to the patriarchal traditions and women's marginalization. Her husband Pappachi is seventeen years older than her and is a high-ranking government official. Mammachi has undergone the savage and brutal treatment of her husband who is jealous of her youth and exceptional talent as a violinist. Mammachi's violin class is abruptly discontinued as her teacher by mistake tells Pappachi that "his wife was exceptionally talented and ...potentially concert class."(p.50) Mammachi is beaten by Pappachi either with a brass flower vase or an ivory handle crop every night:

> Every night he beat her with a brass flower vase. The beatings weren't new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place. One night Pappachi broke the bow of Mammachi's violin and threw it in the river. (pp.47-48)

Chacko, Mammachi's son, comes as her rescuer from the routine savagery. Despite her miserable marital life, Mammachi does not arouse reader's sympathy towards herself as she collaborates with the patriarchy and has the age-old patriarchal notions regarding women's inferior status, instilled in her mind. Mammachi is depicted as a character with typical Indian sensibility for the

husband. Despite her regular beatings, and her husband's aversion, Mammachi cries at Pappachi's funeral as her conjugal duty. Ammu's comment that "Mammachi was crying more because she was used to him than because she loved him" (p.50) is a scathing criticism of Mammachi's hypocritical and superficial attitude. Even after the death of Pappachi, her exploitation is continued as the male chauvinistic authority is shifted to Chacko.

After the retirement of Pappachi, the family is settled at Ayemenem. Mammachi, on demand of Kottayam Bible Society, makes some of her "famous banana jam and tender mango pickle" to present in a fair. The deal brings success and Mammachi gets enough orders to remain busy all year round. Mammachi's success as a pickle maker becomes an obsession for Pappachi. Despite Mammachi's hard labour, he beats her severely. Through Mammachi's torture, Roy presents a sordid reality that even economic independence cannot liberate women from patriarchal tyranny.

Notwithstanding the brutality meted out to Mammachi, she is more than a passive sufferer. She in turn, participates in the oppression of Ammu. She applies double standards of morality. As far as Chacko's sexual exploits with the female workers are concerned, these are, according to her, the outcome of 'Man's Needs'. When Baby Kochamma informs her about Chacko's libertine relationships, she becomes "tense and tight lipped". (p.168)

The narrator comments upon the twisted morality of the Ayemenem family as both women endorse Chacko's "Marxist mind and feudal libido" (p.168) Mammachi's stand on Chacko's libertine relationship reveals that the patriarchy

and the bourgeoisie have the united motives, of exploitation. The anxiety of Baby Kochamma and Mammachi towards the Naxalites "...who had been known to force men from Good Families to marry servant girls whom they had made pregnant."(p.168) is a conspicuous example of their bourgeoisie and patriarchal mentality. 'Good Families' is a sarcastic comment upon the 'so-called' goodness of the sexually perverted men of the upper strata of society.

Mammachi deserves disgust of the readers for not only being mute about Chacko's sexual exploits, but also for building a separate entrance for Chacko's objects of 'Man's Needs' and turning Chacko's room into a brothel:

> Mammachi had a separate entrance built for Chacko's room, which was at the eastern end of the house, so that the objects of his 'Needs' would'nt have to go traipsing *through* the house. She secretly slipped them money to keep them happy. (p.169)

Mammachi's endorsement of Chacko's sexual exploits is a perverse exercise by Mammachi herself. The day Chacko rescued her from the beatings of Pappachi, her sexual relation with her husband ceased as Pappachi never touched her again. Mammachi fulfills her sexuality by proxy. Roy uses Oedipus Complex in the relationship of Mammachi and Chacko, as "...Mammachi packed her wifely luggage and committed it to Chacko's care [...] Her Man. Her Only Love". (p.168) Mammachi's financial assistance to Chacko in his "Disjuncted sex from love. Needs from Feelings" (p.169) can be interpreted as a consequence of her repressed sexuality.

> Mammachi can live her sexuality by proxy through the control she exerts over her son's sexuality, which she runs according to feudally financial rules. Significantly, she is the actual 'Modalalai',or landlord, whom everyone turns to in times of crisis or decision-making concerning the running of

> the factory thus depriving Chacko of his manliness' or male role.[19]

The objects of Chacko's sexual fulfillment are nameless as they are from the lower strata of society and hence the question of identity does not arise for them. The plight of these sexual objects unfolds the misery of thousands of underprivileged women in India who are compelled to turn to prostitution for the fulfillment of the needs of their men folk: "They had young children and old parents or husbands who spent all their earnings in toddy bars." (p.169)

Contrary to her acceptance of Chacko's 'Man's Needs', she is hostile towards Ammu's womanly needs. Mammachi bolsters the patriarchal niche of a pure, sexless divorcee and imposes it upon Ammu. Ammu's sexual relations become a fright for Mammachi in contrast to Chacko's sexual exploits. The narrator comments upon her intolerance of "particular Paravan smell". (p.257) As far as Chacko is concerned, the objects of Chacko's manly needs also belong to the same category as Velutha's. Chacko is not "a dog with a bitch on heat"; (p.258), but Ammu's womanly needs "had defiled generations of breeding [...] and brought the family to its knees [...] people would point at them at weddings and funerals [...] It was all finished now." (p.258) The narrator frankly defines the societal outlook on the affair of a touchable woman with an untouchable man.

Pappachi's character is also presented with negative traits. He is a "monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning". (p.180) He is a patriarch, suppressive to his women folk but "charming and urbane with visitors". He is retired as Director, Department of Entomology. Pappachi's brutality towards his wife and daughter evinces prevalent suppression of women in the respective

stratum of society. The roots of patriarchal oppression are deeply entrenched in every strata of society. Pappachi's discovery of Moth results in his disappointment, as the Moth, he has discovered, is identified as a slightly unusual race of a well known species. But after twelve years, the discovery of the Moth is recognized and it is named after the Acting Director of the department, a junior officer whom Pappachi always disliked. The recognition proves a fright for Pappachi as he becomes more brutal and savage for his family.

> Pappachi's Moth was held responsible for his black moods and sudden bouts of temper. Its pernicious ghost-grey, furry and with unusual dense, dorsal tufts –haunted every house that he lived in. It tormented him and his children and his children's children. (p.49)

Pappachi is an obsessive imitator of western culture. Ammu describes him as "an incurable British C C P, which was short for cchi cchi poach and in Hindi meant shit wiper."(p.51) His ostentation is presented as he wears a well ironed three piece suit and a gold pocket watch even in the scorching heat of Ayemenem. His photograph in Vienna is an emblem of his manic violence and his brutality. In order to strengthen the patriarchal view that working wives are negligent about domestic duties, Pappachi sits on the verandah when expecting visitors and sews buttons that are not missing onto his shirts. The narrator also comments upon the societal outlook toward the working wives and the economic independence of the women, as Pappachi is successful in maligning Mammachi's image in society. The narrator comments upon the incompatibility of western culture in the Indian cultural context as Pappachi's blind imitation of the western style of dressing is uncomfortable for him, yet he imitates it out of his narcissus complex. Pappachi's

attitude is parochial not only for Mammachi but the other members are also subjected to his selfishness and insularity. His attitude that "an English man, any English man..." can not "...covet another man's wife" (p.42) is an epitome of colonized Indian psyche that is culturally displaced on its own in the blind imitation of white masters. Pappachi is a rag picker of the west. His photograph in Vienna, put up in the drawing room, symbolizes his authority and patriarchal attitude that is prevalent in Ayemenem house.

Chacko, like Pappachi, is another patriarchal character. Chacko, "the Rhodes scholar" comes to Ayemenem with his "pickle baron dream" (p.57). He plays an active role in the eternal drama of confrontation between the powerful and powerless.[20] He bolsters the ancient belief that a woman always needs a protector in the form of father, husband, or son, as he emancipates his mother from the tyranny of Pappachi. But paradoxically, later, he becomes a part of oppressive patriarchal system by marginalizing his mother and Ammu. He takes over the pickle factory and makes his mother a sleeping partner. Roy's abhorrence of the patriarchy is evident in her depiction of Pappachi and Chacko. Chacko is presented as a caricature of "prime ministerial material". (p.56) His managerial 'flair' annihilates a small but profitable business and mortgages family assets. The Plymouth that he receives as a heritage from his father is symbolic of patriarchal attitude. Pappachi's patriarchal attitude is concomitant to his Plymouth, as he never allows the women of his family to sit in it. Pappachi purchased it from an Englishman. Thus the Plymouth symbolizes vanity, pomp, and patriarchal tradition that Pappachi receives from his white masters. The rusting state of the

Plymouth after Chacko's migration to Canada symbolizes the withering of the patriarchal system as well as the worn away glory of Ayemenem family. Chacko's intellectual vanity due to his colonized attitude is caustically presented. For him Oxford education is nothing but an embellishment that has colonized him and circumscribed his cerebrum. He himself realizes the plight of his anglophile family. Roy has presented a paradox in the character of Chacko. He is wary of his condition yet he does not try to cast off his intellectual incarceration:

> 'But we can't go in', Chacko explained, 'because we've been locked out. And when we look in through the windows, all we see are shadows[...]because our minds have been invaded by a war. A war that we have won and lost. The very worst sort of war. [...]A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves. (p.53)

Chacko's existential outlook is apparent in his alienation and identity crisis. He has witnessed the hollowness and meaninglessness of life from his childhood. The marital disharmony between his father and mother, and his mother's mute capitulation towards his father's atrocities instills in him a distorted notion of male superiority. His sexual perversions may also be interpreted as his assertion of male superiority. His marriage to a white woman, Margeret Kochamma, is an effort to identify himself with white masters but the marriage fails. Sophie Mol does not recognize him as her father. She calls him as her biological father and insists that Joe is her father.

From the beginning Chacko is presented as a feeble and unsuccessful character. As a son, he is callous and insensitive towards his responsibilities. His callousness towards Mammachi's letters containing the description of Pappachi's brutality and her anxiety for Ammu's future is an evidence of his selfish and

irresponsible attitude towards his family. His personality is paradoxical to his patriarchal attitude vis-à-vis Margaret Kochamma. Despite Margaret Kochamma's indifference towards him, he continues to love her:

> He was grateful to her for not wanting to look after him. For not offering to tidy his room. For not being his cloying mother. He grew to depend on Margaret Kochamma for not depending on him. He adored her for not adoring him. (p.246)

His love for Margaret Kochamma can also be construed out of compulsion. He is well aware of his incapability to lead a life of a responsible husband and hence cannot be a breadwinner for the family. His attitude towards the twins is apathetic and lukewarm as he unhesitatingly says that Ammu, Estha, and Rahel are millstones around his neck. Since he does not want to identify the twins as his relatives, he does not permit them to call him Chachen (father) or uncle:

> Rahel and Estha couldn't call him chachen because when they did, he called them chetan and chedhuti. If they called him Ammaven he called them Appoi and Ammai. If they called him uncle he called them Aunty, which was embarrassing in Public. So they called him Chacko. (p.37)

He seems to confess his own incapability to take the responsibilities of a father or uncle. His physical traits such as a "fat man, with a body to match his laugh" (p.247), with "pus-filled diabetic boil on his foot" (p.249), "an old scab" (p.248) and 'black oblong calluses" (p.248) are suggestive of his ugly, inhuman patriarchal characteristics. Though he is aware that he depends upon the womenfolk of his family, he gains sadistic pleasure by punishing Mammachi and Baby Kochamma. In front of the guests his mien is contrary to his "zamindar mentality", as he does not hesitate to bring opprobrium for the family by showing "pus-filled diabetic boil on his foot" (p.249). In other words, Chacko's

misdemeanour can be termed as divine justice for Baby Kochamma and Mammachi for their offence of collaborating with the patriarchy. Chacko's womanish legs are also symbolic of his incapability to fulfill manly duties. In the strict patriarchal tradition, the man is the bread winner of the family but Chacko does not perform this duty as his sustenance depends upon the womenfolk of his family. His overt confession of his apathy towards Ammu, lies in his statement that "Ammu had no Locusts Stand I." (p.57) His assertion "what's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine" (p.57) evinces his strong legal and social status in Kerala.

Chacko's correspondence with Margaret Kochamma exhibits his perverted sexuality. He fulfills his desire for Margaret Kochamma by proxy like Baby Kochamma fulfills her sexuality by writing letters to Father Mulligan. Roy has presented Margaret Kochamma in a superior status as she considers the correspondence "a comfortable, committed friendship" (p.249) while Chacko takes it as "a way, the only way of remaining in touch with the mother of his child, and the only woman he had ever loved". (p.250)

Chacko's libertine relationship with female workers of his factory is not merely a fulfillment of his manly needs; it can also be defined as his vengeance, as his wife renounces him. Prior to his marriage, he never slept with any woman. His perverted behaviour began after his divorce. Chacko personifies the exertion of money power to suppress the powerless. Chacko's play of "Comrade! Comrade!" exemplifies his deceitful Marxist ideology. Through his character Roy points out that how the suppressive capitalists wield Marxism for their vested

interests. Chacko always tries to assert his authority over the pickle factory albeit Mammachi emasculates him as whenever anything serious happens in the factory; the matter is brought to Mammachi. Symbolically he tries to eliminate Mammachi by making her the sleeping partner of the pickle factory but Mammachi's efforts to run the factory, undermine Chacko's authority. Moreover Mammachi's financial assistance in fulfilling Chacko's manly needs is symbolic of castration of his virility as she could have managed a second marriage for Chacko, but instead she prefers that Chacko should lead a dissolute life. In other words, Mammachi's help in fulfillment of Chacko's manly needs is her assertion of authority over Chacko's maleness. By this perverse exercise Mammachi compels Chacko to sustain himself with her assistance, but in her assertion of female authority she exploits the sexuality of the women of subaltern status. Though Chacko tries to snatch economic power from Mammachi by transferring the ownership of the factory, he forgets that the patriarchal society does not acknowledge the authority of a feeble patriarch like him as the notion of man as a breadwinner is deeply entrenched in patriarchal society. Margaret Kochamma's renunciation of Chacko and Sophie Mol's refusal to acknowledge him as her father is an evidence of his symbolic impotency. His failed endeavours to be a pickle baron, as well as his attempts to fly balsa airplanes are symbolic of his inability.

The God of Small Things is a postcolonial novel as the author has cognizantly entailed history and indigenous redefinition of identities with her own point of view. The author depicts current social turmoil and problems, as well as a clash between the fractional modernization of Indian masses and its traditional

mentalities. Moreover the impacts of globalization over the masses and the geography of India are described vividly. The novel reminisces about tragic history of colonial past. The perpetuation of historical laws through the patriarchal social structure is a remarkable postcolonial aspect of the novel. From the post colonial point of view, the novel castigates anglophilia prevalent in upper strata of society and posits that implementation of exotic culture of Whites in India, has created the question of identity and belongingness. The novel is remarkable not only for highlighting the perpetuation of untouchability and women's marginalization but also for "Anti colonial resistance"[21]. Arundhati Roy dismantles the British cultural hegemony, an age old colonial device for intellectual colonization.

Caricatures depicted in the novels are Roy's caustic comment upon the Anglophilia. Roy presents "self –discovery of India as a modernizing society, regardless of western models".[22] The plot of the novel is framed keeping in view the transitional phase of society that is the era of 1960s/70s.The four generations of Ipe family present the ethos of the particular age. Great grand parents, Reverend E. John Ipe and his wife are the oldest generation, but they have little importance in the plot of the novel. The three generations of the family are significant as the action revolves round them. The important actions occur in 1969, the time Ipe family is perpetuating the residues of British colonizers in its mundane course of life. This is the time two mavericks, Rahel and Estha are in their childhood. The arrival of two whites Margaret Kocahmma and Sophie Mol becomes the cataclysm in the lives of the twins. Roy has caustically described the

minute details of the Anglophile family to impress the two white guests. Both of them are reckoned as epitomes of British civilization. Roy astringently describes the 'pride' and 'elation' of the Anglophile family who comes to welcome white relatives; having the British relatives give the opportunity to this family to emulate the 'superior' and 'progressive' community[23].

> Anybody could see that Chacko was a proud and happy man to have had a wife like Margaret Kochamma. White. In a flowered, printed frock with legs underneath. And brown back- freckles on her back. And arm-freckles on her arms. (p.143)

Chacko, here epitomizes the gentleman, envisioned by Macaulay's Minute. Vilela Passos gives a very acute reason of search for belongingness. The individual tries to identify him/herself with the dominant culture or "dominant code of collective identity"[24]. The urge to identify with the "dominant ideologies of the group" leads the individual to adopt the life style of the dominant ideology. With regard to Anglophilia, the colonized subjects try to identify and eventually assimilate themselves with the dominant culture of Britishers. Colonisers, in order to assert their superiority provoke the colonized subjects to emulate them by adopting or by aping their culture. Roy delineates the incoherence of British culture in India by presenting the Anglophile family. Though Chacko is a self conscious Anglophile, he does not slough the British mannerism. Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol are given superior status in a house where the patriarchal traditions are deeply entrenched. The status of Mammachi, Ammu, Baby Kochamma and Rahel are marginalized whereas Margaret and Sophie Mol are at advantage because of their white skin. Roy presents that patriarchy is also subservient to British colonialism. The Ipe family spends money to emulate or to

ape the colonizers. Chacko's Oxford education and Pappachi's Plymouth are the efforts of the family to identify themselves with their white masters. Even the children are instilled the same Anglophilia as they are forced to speak only in English as well as to opt the ways of Britishers. Comrade Pillai also is not spared of the Anglophilia as he speaks in English in order to cast off his inferior status. His young child Lenin is taught English poems in order to emulate the upper strata of society. Chacko's comment that "going to see *The Sound of Music* was an extended exercise in Anglophilia" (p.55) rightly depicts the family's endeavours to train the children in the manners of Britishers. Even the character of Captain Von Trapp, in The Sound of Music personifies racism and instills the feeling of inferiority in the twins. The narrator presents an analogy between the white and clean. The twins are not white hence they are not clean. The contrast, aroused by the questions of Captain Von Trapp, between the mannerism of the twins and Sophie Mol signifies their subaltern status.

> Captain von Trapp had some questions of his own.
> (a) *Are they clean white children?*
> No. *(But Sophie Mol is.)*
> (b). *Do they blow spit bubbles?*
> Yes. *(But Sophie Mol doesn't)*
> (c) *Do they shiver their legs? Like clerks?*
> Yes. *(But Sophie Mol doesn't.)* (p.106)

Sophie Mol's query about the twins' father symbolizes Sophie Mol's inadvertent effort to make the twins realize their fatherless and hence subaltern status in the house. During the childish conversation between the twins and Sophie Mol, Sophie Mol blatantly announces that she does not love the twins. Sophie Mol's announcement is just an example of racism; however, she is unaware of it. Even the flasks of water, "Boiled water for Margaret Kochamma

and Sophie Mol, tap water for everybody else" (p.46) are dichotomized according to the social and racial status.

The Anglophilia of the family becomes the heritage of Ipe family. Pappachi's urge to be recognized as a noted Entomologist and to claim the membership of British community becomes self inflicting as he wears woolen suits in the scorching heat of Ayemenem. Roy presents the incompatibility and incongruity of aping the west in Indian cultural as well as geographical context through the character of Pappachi. Through the character of Mr. Hollick, Roy slams British behavioural patterns. Mr. Hollick's lust and its cruel execution lies in the fact that at the tea plantation many light skinned children are the corollaries of his dissoluteness. He is ready to put up with the alcoholism and dereliction of Ammu's husband, if Ammu's husband persuades her to sleep with Mr. Hollick. Notwithstanding the grimness of the situation, Pappachi does not acknowledge the reason of Ammu's divorce as he cannot admit that "an Englishman, any Englishman would covet another man's wife" (p.42).

Roy herself presents the definition of anglophile in the novel as it refers to mimicry of British culture and way of life at the cost of forgetting one's "ancestors and history"[25]. The History House, presented in the novel symbolizes the condition of Anglophiles in Indian cultural context. Chacko ironically admits the condition of whole family and the dilemma of belongingness:

> Chacko told the twins that though he hated to admit it, they were all Anglophiles. They were a *family* of Anglophiles. Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history, and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away. (p.52)

Roy implies that Anglophilia is an extended exercise of British racism. Indian subjects participate in the British hegemony by loathing everything that does not belong to their white masters, but in the pursuit of being recognized as a member of the British fraternity, the Anglophiles lack the white skin and hence are denied the British status. The frustration of not being acknowledged as 'British' leads the individual to "self hatred".[25] This frustration is at the root of unbelongingness and cultural displacement of the Anglophiles. This frustration leads to the divide in the personality of the individual. The ripped personality hangs him/her between the two cultures. Characters of Chacko, Pappachi, Baby Kochamma well represent the predicament of the Anglophiles. Chacko is a self aware Anglophile, he is aware of the dilemma of belongingness but the obsession that he receives from his father is deeply entrenched in him that he can not cast off his colonized state of mind. He does not search his cultural roots in the Indian context. Instead he tries to belong to his British family despite the fact that he is a divorcee. Margaret Kochamma has discarded him for a white man named Joe and his daughter Sophie Mol does not acknowledge him as her father and gives him the meaningless status of "just my real dad". Chacko's views regarding his own Indian history and nation are hypocritical as he is not sincere enough to appreciate his historical roots.

Roy has presented Ammu as the feminist voice of protest against Anglophilia. Ammu's plight out of her inferior status invokes her to protest against the prejudices, codes and rules that are hostile to women. Ammu's behaviour is rebellious in order to undermine the authority of the dominant

ideology. Ammu's insolence with Margaret Kochamma is an expression of her anger against Anglophilia and her subordinate status. Margaret Kochamma's surprise at Kochu Maria's way of kissing Sophie Mol is an example of the colonizers misunderstanding and disrespect for native culture and traditions. Ammu's comment "*Must we behave like some godforsaken tribe that's just been discovered"(p.180)* is a scathing criticism of the Angolophiliac attitude of the family in receiving the two white guests. Ammu's acts overtly defy the dominant ideological norms. She always tries to undermine the patriarchy and its colonized outlook. She is a maverick as she marries outside her community and later discards her drunkard husband. She rebels against the age old behavioural patterns of caste, class and gender. Roy presents sexism, casteism, and racism at the root of all human miseries in the world of *The God of small Things.*

The plight of Ammu and her twins is not only part of patriarchal suppression but it is a dreadful consequence of Anglophiliac attitude of the family. Ammu and her twins have to suffer for the 'offence' of drowning Sophie Mol, a white child. Ammu's separation from her twins is a consequence of the family's upheaval and frustration at Sophie Mol's death. The family's apathy towards Rahel's education and Ammu's deteriorated condition on the verge of death is sordid example of Anglophilia. The loss of Sophie Mol remains afresh in the memory of the family whereas Ammu and her twins have been lost in oblivion. The Anglophilia remains in the form of Sophie Mol's memory:

> The loss of Sophie Mol stepped softly around the Ayemenem house like a quiet thing in socks. It hid in books and food. In Mammachi's violin case [...] the loss of Sophie Mol grew robust and alive. It was always there. Like a fruit in season. Every season. As permanent as a Government

> job. It ushered Rahel through childhood (from school to school) into womanhood. (pp.15-16)

Roy sheds light on the emerging fascination of Indian masses for America; a new form of Anglophilia. Roy has presented a sordid reality of America in the form of Rahel's marriage with Larry McCaslin. Rahel's husband is unable to understand her emotions. Offended by her eyes, he becomes indifferent to Rahel. Her reminiscences of job as a night clerk in a bullet proof cabin at a gas station, of drunks vomiting into the money tray, of "pimps propositioned her with more lucrative job offers" of one or two men being shot, stabbed, "ejected from a moving car with a knife in his back" (p.20) are converse to the image of America created in the mind of man who is talking to Comrade Pillai: "'Oower, *oower, oower.* In Amayrica now, isn't it.' It wasn't a question. It was sheer admiration." (p.129)

Roy comments on the economic colonization prevalent in India, waged by America and its allies, and unfold the hidden reality of economic progress of India at the cost of its culture and environment. World Bank loans only give rise to the use of pesticides that obliterate environment of the poor nations like India. Roy's presentation of dismal aspects of economic growth is based on reality as the 'progress' of India jeopardizes its culture and environment. Culture is at stake, as the Indian heritage is modernized and presented for the cheap entertainment of the exotic tourists. Roy's disapproval of making new dams is also expressed in the novel, a major issue of Roy's political writings. One of the major forms of Americanization, substitute of anglophilia is presented as industrialization. Expansion of multinational companies have effected environment. Roy's

description of 'God's Own Country' presents the sordid reality of modernization and urbanization at the cost of environment and culture. Roy's eco-feminist approach is conspicuous as she slams the Indian subjects for their blind imitation of western industrialization and tourism. Meenachal, a feminine figure, is symbolic of the plight of women in twenty first century. The government, a patriarchal functionary is held responsible for the exploitation of Meenachal. Roy sarcastically slams government's policies and its inhuman approach towards the exploitation of natural resources. It is a colonial strategy to exploit the natural resources of the colonized nations leaving behind the hazardous impacts for the colonized subjects. Roy has clearly drawn a line between the capitalist class and the marginalized class through the presentation of 'God's Own Country'. The people from the lower strata of society are compelled to bathe in the toxic water of the river whereas the hotel has a swimming pool for the tourists. The slum beside the hotel exposes the reality of modernization in Kerala.

Meenachal, the life line of the Ayemenem people, has become no more than a swollen drain. The narrator's comment that the river "had the power to evoke fear. To change lives" (p.124) hints at the strong social status of women and the matriarchy in ancient Kerala that has been eliminated by the advent of British to Kerala.

Roy points out that burgeoning progress of India with the government's apathy towards the ecology has taken a heavy toll in the form of acute environmental problems. Moreover the tourism industry is booming at the cost of cultural assassination:

> In the evenings (for that Regional Flavour) the tourists were treated to truncated Kathakali performances ('Small attention spans', the Hotel people explained to the dancers).So ancient stories were collapsed and amputated. Six hour classics were slashed to twenty-minute cameos. (p.127)

The God of Small Things can be construed as a political treatise through which Arundhati Roy denounces the communist policies in Kerala, for their diversion from the principle of equality, abolition of casteism as well aseradication of gender discrimination. The wilting of communist ideology in the ninties is demonstrated through the bleeding red colour of the flag. The politicians represented by Comrade Pillai, are called "professional omleteers" (p.14) whereas the politics is defined as an "old omlette and egg thing". The people that are crushed and utilized for the vested interests of the politicians are given the metaphor of the broken eggs. Communism is shown as a 'political utopia'. Velutha joins Communist Party as he envisages the eradication of casteism and establishment of social equality by the communist government. But his vision is shattered when he encounters the brutal face of politics. Roy projects the Communist government of Kerala as an internal agency to perpetuate the economic as well as intellectual colonization of the people. The women are facing the same subjugation; the untouchables are still undergoing the trauma of untouchability, as they were in the colonial period.

Through the depiction of Ayemenem House, Roy presents a monolithic repressive power structure that has its self-assigned rights to sustain power and authority. In this hierarchy of power, patriarchy is at the top that subjugates the women and untouchables. The patriarchy gets impetus from the religious

prejudices against women and the untouchables. Police, politics and law act as repressive state apparatus to crush any subversive agency within the women and the untouchables. Any kind of upheaval or rebellion is intolerable in this authoritarian power structure. Ammu and Velutha try to infringe the sacrosanct rules of patriarchy and are brutally crushed.

From the beginning of the novel, suspense is created about the course of events. The readers come across the theme of death and decay that is pervaded throughout the novel. At the outset, the bluebottles "stun themselves against clear window panes and die" (p.1). The bluebottles are symbolic of the untouchables and the women who die due to their collision with the patriarchal structure that is symbolized by clear windowpanes. These bluebottles may also be symbolic of Velutha who tries to enter the forbidden territory and meets an excruciating end. The decaying old order is also presented by the desolate condition of Ayemenem House. Old Baby Kochamma is also symbolic of this withering patriarchal structure. In the sharp contrast to the old Ayemenem House and its inmates that represent the old order, "new, freshly baked, iced, Gulf money houses" (p.13) built by the foreign returnees are also symbolic of the emergence of new social order, inverting the old one:

> The world of nature reflects the decay that has overtaken the house. The humid days of the month of May, the shrinking over-ripe fruit, the dissolute bluebottles humming vacuously in the fruity air are all part of over ripeness and rot which descends on the old empty house on the hill with its moss and dampness and its wild overgrown garden.[27]

'The limp and old flag' (p-13) of the Communist Party is also symbolic of incoherence of Communist Policies in a caste ridden, patriarchal society. The

character of Comrade K.N.M. Pillai is an emblem of power hungry Indian politician who does not have fidelity towards the policies of his political patrons. Even the Communists could not eliminate the blight of casteism and untouchability as well as could not apply equality in its true sense.

Roy discusses various issues like man-woman relationship, anglophilia, the patriarchal subordination of women and casteism in the novel. Her novel deals with the eternal conflict between the powerful and the powerless from the point of view of the children. The characters are fictional, but, in fact, represent the hollowness and miseries of human life. Roy's approach in the novel is nihilistic and existential about human life. Like existentialists, all the characters are in constant search for identity and belongingness, as they think that they have been thrown into a Godless universe and their lives are not governed by any divine power. A perusal of the love relationships among the characters, whether it is the relationship between father and son, husband and wife, mother and daughter, shows the hollowness of relationships. Conjugal relationships between Mammachi and Pappachi, Ammu and her husband, Rahel and Lary Mccaslin, Chacko and Margaret are only to acknowledge the institution of marriage; they are overburdened by it and their relationships are devoid of love and mutual understanding. For the characters, marriage is just a fulfillment of erotic desires, and has nothing to do with love. The only relationship based on love and mutual understanding is between Ammu and Velutha. The relationship between Ammu and Velutha is against moral and ethical codes, as it is extra marital. And this relationship is also contrary to the love laws laid down by history. Like other

relationships, it does not go very long, and lasts within a very short span of thirteen days. Ammu's sexual union with Velutha is an intrepid assertion of women's biological needs. Roy presents that the revolt against the patriarchy is not only the cause of their sufferings, but their colossal suppression is a routine exercise by the patriarchy. Mammachi and Ammu are subjected to routine torture by Pappachi, albeit they capitulate mutely towards the patriarchal tyranny. Baby Kochamma does not challenge patriarchal authority but she is destined to lead a life of a spinster. As a post modernist strategy, Roy simply presents the problem faced by the women in different strata of society. As a novelist, she does not present any solution for these problems prevalent in the society. Through the character of Mammachi, Roy posits that economic independence for women cannot liberate them from the clutches of patriarchy. Roy presents a nexus between the religion and the patriarchy or to say presents religion as a patriarchal construct. Roy blames not only men for the plight and marginalization of women but also implicates women who collaborate with the patriarchy.

> Feminist concerns pervade this novel. One of its major themes is certainly the control of female body and sexuality by a patriarchal society governed by a peculiar combination of indigenous tradition and Christian morality.[28]

Roy has projected a very dismal picture of the male psyche. It can go to any extent to obliterate a woman who does not conform to its values. She has presented a nexus between the patriarchy and British colonialism and argues that the patriarchy in Kerala gets impetus from the colonizers as in ancient Kerala, women were in possession of the rights of inheritance and other privileges before the advent of Britishers.

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Chapter-Five

"Frames of Feminine Identity

Jhumpa Lahiri

Interpreter of Maladies
The Namesake
Unaccustomed Earth

Jhumpa Lahiri was born in 1967 in London, in an Indian Bengali family. Jhumpa Lahiri's real name was Nilanjana Sudeshna. When she was enrolled in school, her teacher decided to call her Jhumpa, as it was easy to pronounce. Thus Jhumpa Lahiri became her proper name. She grew up in Rhodes Island, U.S.A. and graduated from Barnard College in English literature. At Boston University, she completed one M.A. in English, another M.A. in Creative Writing, and a third M.A. in Comparative Studies in Literature and the Arts. She was awarded a Ph.D. in Renaissance studies, as well as granted fellowship at Provincetown's Fine Arts Works Centre (1997-1998). Her stories were published in various American journals including *New Yorker.* Lahiri was conferred several awards for her literary genius in fiction and short story writing. The awards that have been bestowed on her, include Trans Atlantic Award from the Henfield Foundation, O' Henry Award for short story *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), PEN/ Hemingway Award (Best Fiction debut of the year) for *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), Addison Metcalf Award from the American Academy of Arts and letters (2000).[1]

Lahiri became the first American of Asian descent to bag Pulitzer Prize, the highest literary award of America for her debut collection *Interpreter of Maladies*. M.F.K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award from the James Beard Foundation (2000) and Guggenheim Fellowship (2002) were also awarded to Jhumpa Lahiri. In 2003, *The Namesake*, her second literary work appeared on the arena. Like her previous book, *The Namesake* also exposed her subjective approach to immigration and exile. In *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa applies various perspectives of narration, viz male, female as well as children perspective of narration whereas in *The Namesake* she presents only the male point of view.

In 2008, another collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* was published. Jhumpa once again exposes the diasporic communities, trying to root themselves into the unaccustomed earth. Immigrant experiences of the characters are similar to those of the characters of her earlier works.

As Jhumpa's writings deal with diasporic experiences, definition and scope of diaspora should be elucidated at the outset. The term 'Diaspora' is originally derived from the Greek word '*diaspirein*' that means to disperse. The term diaspora was applied to the dispersal of the Jews from their homeland.[2] In twenty-first century the range of the term has been increased to assimilate other displaced population on account of colonial expansion, slavery or migration in search of livelihood. Indian diaspora comprises of people of Indian birth or ethnicity. Emmanuel S. Nelson defines the Indian diaspora as "the historical and contemporary presence of people of Indian sub continental origin in other areas of the world." [3]Among the diasporic writers many are the expatriates who deem India as their home and find their roots embedded in Indian culture, tradition and values.

Som Datta Mandal categorizes the Indian English diasporic writers living in U.K., U.S. and other countries into three.[4] The first category is of the writers who are completely assimilated in the host country and refuse to call themselves immigrant writers. Bharati Mukherjee does not wish to be called an exile or an expatriate because to her "acculturation is an important process which has the exuberance of acceptance or assimilation and not the pain of difference or exclusion or alienation."[5]

The second category presents a group of diasporic writers who 'drift between different continents.'[6] These writers have a variety of themes in their writings. Some of them write about the experiences of immigration whereas others define "the exoticism of their home country or of characters who go as aliens and try to fit into the western world."[7] The third category presents the writers of Indian origin whose writings are not connected to the country of their origin. Instead, they write about the culture and life-style of the host country.

Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to the second category of Asian American writers who deal with India as an exotic land, and also with the problems of Indian immigrants adjusting in an alien land. Her short stories are often compared to those of Bharati Mukhrjee. Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories* won the 1998 National Book Critics award. Her characters also expose immigrant sensibility. Most of them are connected to one another through sexual impulse which is a transient passion; whereas Jhumpa's characters are attached to one another on account of their cultural proximity, a permanent tie among individuals.

Interpreter of Maladies is a collection of nine stories, set in America and India. The nine stories have universal human themes i.e. loneliness, exclusion, search for identity and lack of belonging. Along with these themes Jhumpa Lahiri has also projected the themes of love, fidelity, tradition and alienation that impinge the lives of Indians and non-Indians. Most of the characters in Lahiri's stories are from Bengal, living in the alien land of America. Some of them are real life characters. Lahiri has written in the voices of both masculine and feminine genders. In some stories she has projected a third person omniscient narrator. The narrative voice (a group of women) in *The Treatment of Bibi Haldar* is an

experimental strategy as admitted by Jhumpa Lahiri in an interview: "A Faulkner story ['A Rose for Emily'] I admired used that voice and I wanted to try it out. That's why I wrote the story the way I did. It was an experiment for myself."[8]

Culture is the impetus in the lives of Jhumpa's characters. Cultural proximity connects individual to individual. Most of the characters are Bengali. They are connected to one another with strong cultural ties. Whether it is Shukumar and Shoba or Mr. Pirzada and Lilia's parents, they are concomitant to one another only because of the cultural propinquity.

The Temporary Matter presents that how a cultural tradition of Bengal saved a marital bond from split. Shukumar, an Indian American graduate student and his wife Shoba, a second generation Indian American are undergoing the trauma of marital disharmony due to the death of their infant. Their marriage is on the verge of splitting. Shukumar suffers from identity crisis. As a teenager he was apathetic towards the country of his parents. "He preferred sailing camp or scooping ice cream during the summers to going to Calcutta"(p.12) But his father's death aroused in him a curiosity and interest as he started to study its history and "wished now that he had his own childhood story of India".(p.12) This urge for identification with the native land is also conspicuous in Shukumar's mother when she abandons the house, Shukumar grew up in and returned to Calcutta in order to find her roots after the death of Shukumar's father.

Shukumar marries Shoba. Before the birth of the baby, Shukumar loved his work. The trauma of the death of his infant makes him lose the zest for life. The patriarchal notion of man as a breadwinner haunts him as he is still a student

at the age of thirty five while his wife holds a respectable job. The death of the child gives him an inferiority complex. Shoba, too changes as a person.

> She was'nt this way before. She used to put her coat on a hanger, her sneakers in the closet, and she paid bills as soon as they came. But now she treated the house as if it were a hotel. The fact that the yellow chintz armchair in the living room clashed with the blue-and-maroon Turkish carpet no longer bothered her. (p.6)

Stunned with grief, they ignore their routine and even avoid each other. The death of the infant looms large over their marital life. But a cultural tradition of Bengal becomes the saviour of their marriage. They get a notice from the electricity department that the electricity will be cut off for one hour from eight P.M. for five days. Shoba reminisces about a cultural tradition of Bengal in which every body had to say something during the power failures at her grand mother's house. Shoba asks Shukumar to say something that they have never told before each other. Both of them share some secret happenings or facts of their lives every night. The fifth night Shukumar comes to know that this game of revelations, conducted by Shoba is just to reveal a shocking secret that she is moving to a separate apartment. Shukumar is stunned at this revelation. It is now Shukumar's turn to reveal a secret. He reveals the gender of the baby that he had sworn not to disclose before Shoba. Shoba wanted it to be a surprise and forbade the doctor to reveal the gender. At the time of delivery she was not in her senses so she could not be aware of the gender of the still born baby. She assumes that Shukumar is also not aware of the gender of the baby but by then Shukumar returned from Baltimore and held the baby before cremation. Shukumar's revelation is to hurt Shoba but it turns to be a blessing into disguise as both of them share the grief and weep together "for the things they now knew."(p.22)

Jhumpa Lahiri has presented the metaphor of darkness. Darkness symbolizes mysteries. Darkness gives courage to make daring revelations and becomes a metaphor of asylum as both of them avoid each other in the light.

Shoba's endeavours to look for a separate apartment can be construed as her assertion of female individuality. She needed her husband's support to overcome the trauma. Shukumar, instead of understanding her mental condition, tried to avoid her, thus creating marital disharmony. Fortunately the game played by Shoba proves to be a boon. At the end, the warmth of evening is symbolic of the warmth in their relationship. Bradfords' walking arm in arm also signifies the reunion of Shoba and Shukumar.

The second story *When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine*, presents themes of cultural displacement and human relationships. The story is written from the third person point of view. Lahiri presents how geographical and historical occurrences may change one's identity. She also posits that politics can change the identity of a whole society. The narrator is a seven year old girl Lilia. Mr. Pirzada is an Eastern Pakistani immigrant. He is a lecturer of Botany at Dacca University and comes to Boston on a fellowship of the government of Pakistan to study the foliage of New England. The story is written against the backdrop of Indo-Pak war of 1971. During his stay in Boston, political unrest starts in Dacca owing to the struggle for autonomy by Eastern Pakistanis. The narrator Lilia's parents live on the campus of Boston University. Living in an alien culture, cut off from their homeland, Lilia's parents have a yearning to associate with their compatriots. On the basis of cultural proximity, Mr. Pirzada is invited by the narrator's parents.

Lilia as a small child believes Mr. Pirzada to be an Indian, but is soon corrected by her father. Even then, her young mind is incapable of imbibing this distinction.

> It made no sense to me. Mr. Pirzada and my parents spoke the same language, laughed at the same jokes, looked more or less the same. They ate pickled mangoes with their meals, ate rice every night for supper with their hands. Like my parents, Mr. Pirzada took off his shoes before entering a room, chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, drank no alcohol, for dessert dipped austere biscuits into successive cups of tea. Nevertheless my father insisted that I understand the difference, and he led me to a map of the world taped to the wall over his desk. (p.25)

Lilia tries to categorize Mr. Pirzada on the basis of external features (same race and colour of skin) but her father insists that she categorize Mr.Pirzada on the basis of shared culture, tradition and practices.

Tommie Adrienne Sears writes:

> While Lilia sees her parents and Mr. Pirzada as united because of their skin color, her father uses colors on a map to show they are different: 'As you see Lilia, it's a different country, different color' my father said. Pakistan was yellow, not orange.' Here, ironically Lilia's father uses color as a way of both uniting some people and separating others based on the ways in which they identify themselves religiously and nationally. Pakistan is separate from India not because the people are inherently different, as the similarity between Mr. Pirzada and Lilia's parents shows, but because of religion, which is not always outwardly recognizable.[9]

During the pandemonium in Dacca, created by Pakistani army, everything collapsed. Mr. Pirzada could not contact with his wife and seven daughters because of the upheaval. Jhumpa Lahiri has posited two different aspects of culture. It is cultural affinity that creates a bond between Mr. Pirzada and the narrator's family in the country overseas, on the other hand clash of culture and language parted the human beings forever in the same geographical region. Lahiri shuns the fanaticism to gain dominance over other culture and language. It ruptures the social fabric and harmony. She has also indicated ambivalence

among the immigrants. They are obsessed by the distinct life style and eating habits of their host country whereas they have an aversion to their own country because of the communal tension and hectic way of life. For instance, Lilia's parents are obsessed that "The super market did not carry mustard oil, doctors did not make house calls, neighbours never dropped by without an invitation."(p.24) Lilia's father is offended at the fact that Lilia is unaware of the current situation of East Pakistan. Whereas her mother is content that Lilia is spared from the hardships of their native land.

As little Lilia comes to know the distinction between Indians and Pakistanis and between Hindus and Muslims, she starts analyzing the manners of Mr. Pirzada and notices an eccentricity in his behaviour. Lilia establishes an emotional proximity with Mr. Pirzada, though only in her fantasy and never lets it to be disclosed. She prays for the well being of Mr. Pirzada's family by "eating a piece of candy for the sake of his family."(p.34) She notices that Mr. Pirzada's pocket watch is eleven hours ahead of American time and is synchronized with the time of Dacca. Pirzada's watch represents his connection with his seven daughters and wife. Soon through the news broadcasts Lilia comes to know the gravity of the situation in Dacca, Mr. Pirzada becomes more solemn and Lilia's parents invite him to stay with them. The critical situation of East Pakistan not only impinges Mr.Pirzada but also Lilia's parents, as the narrator describes "Most of all I remember the three of them operating during that time as they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and a single fear."(p.41)

The story is written from a child's perspective with an adult hindsight. The story ends with the return of Pirzada to Bangladesh and his subsequent reunion

with his family that is celebrated in America by the narrator's parents. Lilia and her parents have different notions of identity; for Lilia, race is the identity whereas her parents consider culture and religion as the root of one's identity. Interestingly Lilia, as a child suffers from identity crisis as most immigrants do. When she wears a witch costume for Halloween, she is not identified as American by the neighbours. Ignoring her American citizenship, they remark that they have never seen an Indian witch before. Her father's disappointment of lack of her knowledge of Indian history instigates her to read about the country of her parents. But her teacher, Mrs. Kenyon forbids her to do so. Mrs. Kenyon's emphasis is on learning U.S. history. This exemplifies the superior dismissive outlook towards the third world. Her scolding to Lilia can also be interpreted as her desire to delink her from her ancestral roots and bicultural identity. Instead she demands that Lilia internalize American history and culture.

The title story *Interpreter of Maladies* reflects the psychological trauma of Mrs. Das, an Indian –American woman who visits India with her husband and children. The story shows the distancing of second generation Indian-Americans from their ancestral country. The story is narrated in the third person. The Das family considers India as an exotic place. Mr. Kapasi, a tourist guide, escorts the Das family to the Konark Temple. At first glance, Mr. Kapasi classifies the Das family on the basis of race, as Lilia, the narrator of *When Mr. Pirzada Came To Dine* has done. They share Mr. Kapasi's complexion. But soon, he realizes that for Das family, nationality is more important than their race as Mr. Das emphasizes his purely American identity and not the hyphenated one.

> "You left India as a child?" Mr. Kapasi asked when Mr. Das had settled once again into the passenger seat.

> "Oh, Mina and I were born in America," Mr. Das announced with an air of sudden confidence. "Born and raised. Our parents live here now, in Assansol. They retired. We visit them every couple years."(p.45)

Mr. Kapasi's impression of the Das family as Indian comes to an end when he analyses their behavioural pattern. The family is "dressed as foreigners did" (p.44) and Mr. Das shakes hand as Americans do. This shows that the family is not only concerned about their national identity but also has internalized the American way of life. A contrast between the first generation and the second generation immigrants is presented through the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Das and their parents. Their parents return to India and make it their home whereas Mr. and Mrs. Das, alien to the culture and tradition of their ancestral land, visit India as a tourist spot. To Mr. and Mrs. Das the sight of an emaciated "barefoot man,... head wrapped in a dirty turban, seated on top of a cart of grain sacks pulled by a pair of bullocks" (p.49) represents not the poverty but stark reality of India, which he photographs. Jhumpa Lahiri presents an analogy of the barefoot man and monkeys. The monkeys are also being photographed by the family as a collectible. Despite the racial resemblance with the barefoot man, Mr. Das does not identify with him; instead he proudly promotes his American identity.

The same exoticism is present in Mrs. Das' compliments regarding Mr. Kapasi's job as an interpreter of maladies. Like her husband, she idealizes Mr. Kapasi's job for her personal reasons. Mr. Kapasi analyses that Mrs. Das is averse to her husband and children, and notices that she is keenly interested in him. Mr. Kapasi treats Mrs. Das' interest as a romantic advance. He fantasies about a future relationship with her.

> She would write to him, asking about his days interpreting at the doctor's office, and he would respond

> eloquently, choosing only the most entertaining anecdotes, ones that would make her laugh out loud as she read them in her house in New Jersey. In time she would reveal the disappointment of her marriage, and he his. (p.55)

Mr. Kapasi's fantasies come to an end only after he realizes the true nature of his relationship with Mrs. Das. She, like her husband, uses Mr. Kapasi for her own ends, as she has been overburdened by a sense of guilt of being a mother of an illegitimate son for eight years. She confides this to Mr. Kapasi. Soon Mr. Kapasi realizes his status when he asks Mrs. Das that "Is it really pain you feel, Mrs. Das, or is it guilt?" (p.66) Mrs. Das does not reply. Mrs. Das' fascination with Mr. Kapasi's job finishes. The only connection that remains is in the form of a piece of paper in which Mr. Kapasi has written his address. This is also inadvertently thrown away by Mrs. Das and the superficial bond that was created on the basis of racial similarity between Mr. Kapasi and the Das family is disconnected.

Mrs. Das' plight has its origins in a lifetime of neglect, first by her parents, and later on by her husband.

> As a result of spending all her time in college with Raj, she continued, she did not make many close friends. There was no one to confide in about him at the end of a difficult day, or to share a passing thought or a worry. Her parents now live on the other side of the world, but she had never been very close of them, any way. After marrying so young she was overwhelmed by it all, having a child so quickly, and nursing , and warming up bottles of milk and testing their temperature against her wrist while Raj was at work, dressed in sweaters and corduroy pants, teaching his students about rocks and dinosaurs. Raj never looked cross or harried, or plump as she had become after the first baby. (p.63)

In short, Mrs. Das' plight is due to the apathy of the patriarchy. As an unmarried girl, her parents thought only of her marriage. They imagined that after giving her away in marriage they would be exempted from the responsibility of parenthood. That she may need emotional support never crossed their minds. She was a girl and was destined for another family. Hence she was a constant outsider, never fully assimilated in her own family. The same attitude is shown by Raj who neglects her emotionally. The continuous neglect of her emotions, urged her to trespass the boundaries of morality that is laid down by the patriarchy.

The next story *A Real Durwan* depicts the travails of the protagonist Boori Ma. She lost her "economic identity".[10] The story is set in Calcutta. Boori Ma is a Bangladeshi refugee and is provided a shelter at an apartment in return for guarding the apartment. Boori Ma's migration from Bangladesh to India is not for financial motives, instead she is forced to migrate due to the political upheaval of 1947 (partition of India). Boori Ma's loss of identity is due to her forced migration. Through the reminiscences of Boori Ma, Lahiri presents the crisis of humanity born from politics. The story traces how politics devastated human relationships. The Bengali masses, once unified by their common cultural heritage were divided on the basis of politics. Boori Ma's reminiscences of her past life represent her attempts to heal the scars of the painful migration. Throughout the story she does not have any proper name except Boori Ma. Hence she lives a life without any identity. For her, the economic identity of her past life is more important than that of the present one:

> "Yes, there I tasted life, here I eat my dinner from a rice pot." At this point in the recital Boori Ma's ears started to burn; a pain chewed through her swollen knee, "Have I mentioned that I crossed the border with just two bracelets on my wrist? Yet there was a day when my feet touched nothing but marble. Believe me don't believe me, such comforts you cannot dream them," (p.71)

Boori Ma's recital of her previous life in Pakistan is regarded as a bluff by the residents of the building. The inhabitants doubt the veracity of Boori Ma's version of the story and create their own theory:

> The theory eventually circulated that Boori Ma had once worked as hired help for a prosperous *zamindar* back east, and was therefore capable of exaggerating her past at such elaborate lengths and heights. Her throaty impostures hurt no one. All agreed that she was a superb entertainer. (p.73)

Throughout the story she is depicted as an alienated figure. Her description of the past life is treated by the inhabitants as fabricated. Her condition is exacerbated with the progress of events when Mr. Lal installs a wash basin in the balcony. One day, the basin was stolen in the absence of Mr. Lal and Boori Ma was expelled for the dereliction of her duty. Boori Ma's attachment with the skeleton keys is suggestive of her endevour to preserve her previous economic identity. Boori Ma presents an existentialist aspect of the story and behaves as if she is thrown into an incongruous and absurd world full of vicissitudes of life, having no purpose and meaning.

The fifth story of the collection is entitled *'Sexy'* that deals with a brief adulterous relationship between Miranda, a white lady and Devajit Mitra, a Bengali immigrant. The story presents the cultural displacement of the immigrants and the feeling of exoticism of the native Americans towards South Asian immigrants. Except Dev, Miranda has some other South Asian acquaintances, including Laxmi, her co-worker, and the Dixit family. But her perception of India and Indians is as purely exotic. Miranda is identified in the story only through the colour of her skin and physical features.

> She had silver eyes and skin as pale as paper, and the contrast with her hair, as dark and glossy as an espresso bean, caused people to describe her as striking, if not pretty. She had a narrow, egg-shaped head that rose to a prominent point. Her features, too, were narrow, with nostrils so slim that they appeared to have been pinched with a clothespin. Now her face glowed, rosy at the cheeks, smoky below the brow bone. (p.87)

Raj Chetty describes Miranda "conspicuously exoticist"[11] as her perception of South Asian Americans of her acquaintance, including Dev, is based on the colonial notion of "ethnic other". Her first meeting with Dev at a shop clearly demonstrates her race consciousness, as she identifies Dev not as an American but with his hyphenated identity by the colour of his skin. "Miranda noticed a man standing at one of the counters...The man was tanned, with black hair that was visible on his knuckles." (pp.85-86) Miranda's consciousness for her ethnic identity is conspicuous as she wonders "where he was from. She thought he might be Spanish, or Labanese." (p.87)

Miranda's consciousness of her racial identity and cultural differences is based on the colonial notion of cultural stereotype of third world countries. She imbibes this stereotypical notion after her encounter with the neighbouring Dixit family during her childhood. Her childhood experience of a birthday party at Dixits' house was frightening as she minutely observers the cultural differences:

> Miranda remembered a heavy aroma of incense and onions in the house, and a pile of shoes heaped by the front door. But most of all she remembered a piece of fabric, about the size of a pillow case, which hung from a wooden dowel at the bottom of the stairs. It was a painting of a naked woman with a red face shaped like a knight's shield. She had enormous white eyes that tilted toward her temples and mere dots for pupils. Two circles, with the same dots at their centers, indicated her breasts. In one hand she brandished a dagger. With one foot she crushed a struggling man on the ground. [...]

> "It's the goddess Kali" Mrs. Dixit explained brightly, shifting the dowel slightly in order to straighten the image. (pp.95-96)

Kali is a powerful Indian goddess. She is symbolic of female strength, will power and determination. Miranda is greatly overwhelmed. Moreover other white children's remark "The Dixits dig shit" (p.95) demonstrates the white disregard for the 'ethnic other'. She is ashamed of her previous attitude towards the 'other'. Concept of 'other' is an outcome of the western (occidental) notion of stereotyped east (orient). The orient symbolizes a set of representations of its language, culture, literature and geography by the western political forces. Said's critique *Orientalism* (1978) challenged the dichotomy of the world between east and west or orient and occident. This dichotomy, according to Said, is not limited to the geographical boundaries created by the west, but also encompasses an ideology presenting the orientals as "inveterate liars... lethargic and suspicious... irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, different"[10] in contrast to "rational, virtuous, mature, normal"[11] occidentals.

> Her shame now over her childish racism stems from the realization that there is nothing to fear in differences, nothing to make fun of, as her close interaction with "Indian" cultural difference as an adult demonstrates.[12]

But her changed attitude towards India and Indians is also due to her fascination for India. She wants to learn about Indian culture from her Indian lover. When she makes love to Dev, she fancies "deserts, and elephants, and marble pavilions floating on lakes beneath a full moon." (p.96) She visits an Indian restaurant and relishes Indian food. Raj Chetty describes Miranda's relationship with Dev as a blend of her exoticism and quest for love. Tommie Adrienne Sears presents an interesting interpretation to the relationship between

Dev and Miranda: 'Dev thus becomes the personification of the sexually desirable "exotic foreigner" rather than an individual.'[13] But her exoticism proves a boon for her when she goes to watch a Madhuri Dixit film. She becomes conscious of her status as a mistress. Dev's pursuit of Miranda is purely physical. On the other hand, Miranda's pursuit of Dev is her quest for love. Dev's words "You're sexy", uttered in the Mapparium present Dev's erotic feelings, sans love, towards Miranda. Moreover, the same words "You're sexy", innocently repeated by Rohin, the seven year old, highlight the undercurrents. But the meaning of the words "loving someone you don't know."(p.107) spoken by Rohin, whose mother undergoes the trauma of her husband's infidelity, make Miranda realize the immorality of her adulterous relationship. She realizes that Dev's infatuation for her is only to consume her as a sexual object. Moreover she comprehends the adverse effect of a man's infidelity to his wife over the marital life, as she withdraws herself from the relationship. Her withdrawal from the relationship is an attempt to maintain her feminine identity, as being a mistress she will be reduced to a sexual object and hence marginalized.

On the other hand, Dev is presented as a culturally displaced character who in order to assimilate into American culture, sheds his cultural values of fidelity in marital life. His voyeuristic attitude towards Miranda when he "said he liked that her legs were longer than her torso, something he'd observed the first time she walked across a room naked" (p.89) is converse to his Indian notion of morality.

Mrs. Sen, in the next story *Mrs. Sen's,* exemplifies the Indian immigrants facing the problems of assimilation in the alien culture of U.S. The story is told

from the point of view of a third person omniscient narrator. Mrs. Sen, a thirty year old lady, is the baby sitter of a seven year old boy Eliot. She looks after him while Eliot's mother is at work. The narrator gives every minute detail of the problems faced by Mrs. Sen in adjusting with the new atmosphere. The narrator's description is through the eyes of Eliot, that is why "is'nt tainted by exociticist desire".[14] Mrs. Sen's yearning and nostalgia for Bengali traditions is depicted in a vivid manner.

Susan Ram writes:

> In this beautifully observed story East meets West in the shared experience of loneliness and the poignancy of Mrs. Sen's situation is handled with utmost delicacy and control unsullied by any hint of mawkishness.[15]

Through Mrs. Sen's desperate condition in imbibing American life style and her incapability to learn to drive, Lahiri evinces that western culture and life style is not universally applicable, specifically it is incompatible for the immigrants that have strong cultural ties with their native land. Mrs. Sen also debunks the glamourised notion of Indian masses about western life and luxuries:

> '"Send pictures,' they write. 'Send pictures of your new life.' What picture can I send?" She sat exhausted, on the edge of the bed, where there was now barely room for her. "They think I live the life of a queen, Eliot." She looked around the blank walls of the room. "They think I press buttons and the house is clean. They think I live in a palace." (p.125)

Mrs. Sens' life in America is the reflection of the life that she had lived in India. Her description of 'home', confuses Eliot initially, but later he becomes perspicacious to understand the meaning of 'home'. For Mrs. Sen, home always denotes India, not her apartment in America. Mrs. Sen's bold assertion of India as

her home, prompts Eliot to observe the cultural differences between the two countries. Mrs. Sen's question to Eliot whether the people of the neighbourhood would come, if she screams, vividly differentiates the societal proximity in India with that of social aloofness in America. Eliot sympathizes with Mrs. Sen for her isolation from her culture owing to the geographical distances. Eliot does not take the traditions and culture of India as other, rather his innocent perception is different from the adults. Eliot's observations of Mrs. Sen are ambivalent as Eliot's experiences are coloured by the "fear, astonishment, fascination, and awe –toward an Indian living abroad."[16]

The story is based on Jhumpa Lahiri's experiences as she herself admits, "Mrs. Sen is based on my mother who baby sat in our home. I saw her one way but imagined that an American child may see her differently, reacting with curiosity, fascination or fear to things I took for granted."[17] Hogskolan Dalarna interprets that Mrs Sen suffers the loss of her social identity of a Bengali housewife, owing to the migration.[18] Her social interaction with other Bengali women, back home in India is a constant feature that makes her cling to her Indian identity. Physically she is in America, but her heart and soul are in India.

In *This Blessed House*, Lahiri has projected two different aspects of the lives of Indian-Americans through Sanjeev and Twinkle. Sanjeev and Twinkle are a young married couple, settled in U.S.A. Sanjeev is a former M.I.T. student and now runs a successful business, whereas Twinkle is a student at Stanford University, working on Irish poetry for her thesis. The new house, they have moved into, contains Christian paraphernalia left behind by the former Christian

owners. Twinkle shows an obsessive fascination for the Christian objects, which offends Sanjeev. Sanjeev's consciousness of his religious identity problematizes a petty matter into a marital discord. The opening scene, presents their two different approaches regarding their identity. While discovering Christ's statue, Twinkle is ecstatic, whereas Sanjeev's response is contemptuous as he terms it, "idiotic statue."(p.136) Sanjeev represents attitude of 'culturally other'. He views the Christian objects as a menace for his Hindu identity and asserts, "We're not Christian". (p.136) Twinkle responds to Sanjeev in a persuasive manner, "We're not Christian .We are good little Hindus." Sanjeev's perspectives towards the statues evince the cultural conflict, whereas Twinkle's persistence to keep the statues in the house is on the basis of the compatibility of two different religions and cultures:

> Twinkle, then, becomes Lahiri's example of an adult who is able to negotiate cultural intermingling, both in her own body/identity and in her interactions with others, in a way that isn't "othering". In fact, it is Twinkle who most positively negotiates her identity as an American of Indian descent, in contrast to her husband Sanjeev, who struggles with this negotiation. When the reader glimpses into Twinkle's personality, her Indianness is muted but not absent, present but not foregrounded as artificial, exotic, privileged, celebrated. Twinkle does'nt let it be. On the other hand, Sanjeev's Indianness is foregrounded but undermined, privileged but superficial and problematic, present but uncomfortable and irrational, because he lets it be.[19]

Adriana Elena Stoican gives a feminist interpretation to the story and views Sanjeev's standpoint as motivated by the patriarchy.[20] Sanjeev's marriage to Twinkle is based on the "Indian traditional marriage scheme." Sanjeev's marriage to Twinkle evinces that as an immigrant, he wants to preserve his

Bengali identity. In order to accomplish his glorified vision of cultural preservation, he ties the knot with Twinkle, assuming her the embodiment of Indian culture. Sanjeev's vision of Twinkle as a preserver of Indian culture is based on his patriarchal notion of the perfect Indian wife. His arranged marriage is solemnized at the insistence of his mother. Twinkle fulfils the standards to be an ideal wife, as she is pretty, educated, and from a suitably high caste. But Twinkle's behaviour is subversive to the patriarchal notion of an ideal Hindu wife. The sole connection with Indian culture and tradition is her arranged marriage. But this link also seems to be frail as she does not submit herself to Sanjeev as an ideal wife is expected to do in an arranged marriage. Her attitude compels Sanjeev to rethink his assumption that Twinkle loves him. "Though she did not say it herself, he assumed then that she loved him too, but now he was no longer sure." Twinkle's anti normative attitude is reflected in her westernized behaviour as she smokes cigarettes, drinks wine and does not like to cook Indian food. During the housewarming party Sanjeev introduces Twinkle to Douglas, one of his colleagues by her real name Tanima. But Twinkle, instead of accepting her Indian Hindu identity, prefers to be called Twinkle, a name that is westernized. She is attracted to the Christian paraphernalia, as she does not view the statues as sacred and pious. They are merely "beautiful", "spectacular and cute" for her. In the last scene, she along with her Indian and American guests finds a fifteen kilo silver bust of Jesus in the attic. The discovery of the bust is an enjoyable game. The Christian objects for which she has a fascination, present her attitude of "cultural other." In short, Twinkle's behaviour in her marital life unfolds her resistance of the patriarchy. She establishes a female identity free

from the norms of the patriarchy. Simultaneously her exotic vision of Christian objects, curbs her mute acceptance of and assimilation into the American culture. Thus the identity that Twinkle has created is neither governed by the patriarchy, nor has she mingled into American culture.

The Treatment of Bibi Haldar, is set in Calcutta, and Jhumpa Lahiri has projected collective female voices 'we' as omniscient narrators. The story deals with a marginalized woman, suffering from occasional fits of hysteria. Her attempts to overcome her predicament and marginality are dominated by the concept of "normative Hindu womanhood."[21] A normative Hindu womanhood is defined by the community of women who narrate the story. Bibi Haldar is incapable of fulfilling the patriarchal niche of a wife hence she is unfit for marriage. The traditional notion of the patriarchal niche for women is upheld by the neighbourhood women. The neighbourhood women empathize with Bibi Haldar and boycott her cousin for his gross negligence of Bibi. Bibi Haldar also wants to look like other women and she feels that marriage is a remedy for her illness. The doctor also agrees and prescribes that only a "sexual life as a married woman may be the appropriate treatment."[22]

Bibi's abnormality is well known in the community, hence no suitor comes to propose to her despite Bibi's cousin publishing an advertisement in the matrimonial columns. Bibi's condition is exacerbated by her cousin and his wife when Haldar's wife becomes pregnant. Bibi's mental illness is regarded as inauspicious for the unborn child. She is compelled to eat separately and to sleep in the store house to avoid her 'contagious' illness. An irony is presented as the

society defines a normative role of womanhood for Bibi but when she tries to conform to this role, she is deprived of the identity of a perfect woman. In order to cure her illness and assert her feminine identity, she deviates from the normal code of conduct. When her cousin directs her to live in the store room, she asserts, "Now I am free to discover life as I please." (p.170) She enjoys her isolation; her yearning for a husband is pacified. After some time, the neighbours are stunned to know that Bibi is pregnant. The neighbouring women help Bibi to deliver the child, and teach her to rear the child. Bibi refuses to disclose the identity of the child's father. She takes the charge of her cousin's failed business and runs it into a small venture and successfully brings up her child. Bibi Haldar's assertion of feminine identity in a conventional manner is curbed by the society. So she opts for the unconventional way, "of single motherhood as the frame of her female identity."[22]

The last story, *The Third and Final Continent,* shuttles from London to Boston. The story is written in first person narrative voice. The narrator is a Bengali immigrant who initially faces the problems of adjustment in an unfamiliar culture. The narrator hires a room in Mrs. Croft's house. Mrs. Croft, an elderly woman of 103 years, exemplifies American nationalism and old American values. She is proud of the fact that her country has sent men on the moon. She adheres to orthodox values and does not permit her elderly daughter to chat with the narrator. The narrator reminisces about the early days of his arranged marriage. Both he and his wife were as alien to each other as they were to American culture and

atmosphere. Mrs. Croft's compliment promotes the proximity between the newly wed couple.

> I like to think of that moment in Mrs. Croft's parlor as the moment when the distance between Mala and me began to lessen. Although we were not yet fully in love, I like to think of the months that followed as a honeymoon of sorts[...] At night we kissed, shy at first but quickly bold, and discovered pleasure and solace in each other's arms. (p.196)

Jhumpa Lahiri has posited human relationship along with the relationship on the basis of cultural proximity. The narrator is sad at the death of Mrs. Croft, about which he comes to know through an obituary published in a newspaper. Mrs. Croft is the sole character whom the narrator feels an attachment in the unfamiliar atmosphere of America. The narrator's concern that his son should imbibe Indian values and culture embodies the concern of thousands of immigrants who want to preserve their cultural heritage in their future generation. The concluding part of the story expresses the narrator's impulse to adjust in the new environment. The narrator philosophically asserts that once adjustment was simply a figment or the imagination for him, but now he has become accustomed to changes in his life. Jhumpa Lahiri's collection deals with all aspects of womanhood. Indian and western women share a plateform as they deal with the travails of life.

The same trauma of exile and alienation among the Indian diasporas living in alien cultures of USA is presented in *The Namesake* as presented in the *Interpreter of Maladies*. Jhumpa Lahiri beautifully carves out the nostalgia, acculturation, and contra acculturation of Indian immigrants in the novel. She,

herself, belongs to the second generation of Indian immigrants, and presents her subjectivity regarding the experiences of immigrants. Her characters are dislocated in various ways due to either monetary reasons (in search of their sustenance) or due to their urge to create an identity in the alien land and cultures. Jhumpa Lahiri delineates characters in search of identity and deals with their dilemma in opting for the host culture. She exemplifies the dilemma of belongingness. Having multicultural roots, she strives to establish a native Bengali identity and simultaneously attempts to create a new identity in the Indian-American cultural context. Lahiri expounds the eternal trauma of humanity i.e. cultural dislocation and identity crisis. She chooses Bengali migrants, for she is well aware of the cultural traditions of Bengal as well as has inherited them and hence presents these traditions vividly. From the existentialist point of view, Lahiri's characters in *The Namesake,* consolidate Jean-Paul Sartre's and Albert Camus' views regarding the existence of human life. The characters play out an isolated existence of one "who is cast into an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value or meaning, and to represent human life –in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves from the nothingness whence it came towards the nothingness where it must end—as an existence which is both anguished and absurd."[23] Characters of Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol, and Moushumi exemplify the trauma of mankind. All the characters are entangled in their constant search for identity.

Apart from cultural clash, Lahiri delineates the clash between the two generations regarding the adherence of immigrant cultural values and traditions.

Eventually this generation gap ends, when the second generation of immigrants is disenchanted by the host culture. Being asked regarding the manifestation of her personal experiences as an immigrant in the novel, Jhumpa Lahiri confesses:

> The question of identity is always a difficult one, but especially so for those who are culturally displaced, as an immigrants are, of those who grow up in two worlds simultaneously, as is the case for their children. The older I get, the more I am aware that I have somehow inherited a sense of exile from my parents, even though in many ways I am so much more American than they are [...] I never know how to answer the question. "Where are you from?" If I say I am from Rhodes Island, people are seldom satisfied. They want to know more, based on things such as my name, my appearance, etc. alternatively if I say I am from India. A place where I was not born and have never lived, this is also inaccurate. It bothers me less now. But it bothered me growing up, the feeling that there was no single place to which I fully belong.[24]

The novel deals with the second-generation immigrants and their lack of belonging. Moushumi suffers from this lack of belonging and her quest for belonging urges her to find her roots in the third language and culture of France. Gogol suffers from the same dilemma and tries to mingle with the Americans. Despite their continual efforts to imbibe the host culture, they are not identified as fully American because of the colour of their skin. The colour of their skin becomes a major impediment in the course of formation of American identity. They are called A B C D (American born confused Desi) because of their sense of alienation for either culture (American and Indian). Lahiri demonstrates her experiences through the character of Gogol Ganguli. As a child, she did not understand her parents' adherence to Indian culture. As an adult, she admits that she sympathises with her parents' predicament of being immigrants. Gogol as an

adolescent, even as an adult, is averse to his parental adherence to Indian culture. This realization comes to him only after the death of his father.

The experiences of the second-generation immigrants, presented in the novel, are in contrast to the sanctified familial traditions of the first generation. The first generation strongly disapproves of the American life style, in return, the second-generation immigrants discard the cultural values that they inherited, and view them as hindrances in their course of assimilation into the host culture. Thus, the family space is contaminated through cultural hybridization. The homogeneity of Bengali culture, that the first generation is trying to preserve in the family space, concedes to a heterogeneous one. The inevitability of assimilation in the host culture in the second generation gives rise to the divergences and complexities of relationship and opinions. As far as Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli are concerned, they one way or another, manage to preserve the cultural traditions of Bengal. The first blow to the cultural traditions occurs at Gogol's birth. At the time of discharging the baby from the hospital, Ashoke is told to name the child to get the birth certificate. This puts the couple into a dilemma, as they have to wait for the letter from Ashima's grandmother. The letter contains a *bhalonam* (a good name) for their child. As the letter does not arrive, the couple is forced to name the child instantly. Lahiri describes the Bengali custom of giving two names to a child; the *bhalonam* (literally good name or formal name) that is used in the public spaces and *daknam* (meaning pet name) that is used in the family by near and dear ones.

The child is named Gogol Ganguli. The first intrusion of American culture becomes the raison d'être of his predicament. Gogol is a Russian writer whom Ashoke treats as a saviour. The peculiarity of the name, Gogol that it is neither an American name nor an Indian one, increases the child's dilemma. The name becomes a cause of exasperation for him in school. The sense of alienation continues in the following years. One day, on a school trip of some historical intent, he has to visit a cemetery. There, he experiences a delinking from the land where he has born. He realises that being a Hindu, "he himself will be burned, not buried, that his body will occupy no plot of earth, that no stone in this country will bear his name beyond life." (p.69)

> The cemetery is thus employed as a metaphor, suggesting Gogol's lack of roots in the country. He does not have any ancestral history in the land that would connect him to any tradition in the national space; he is so different that his social and religious rite will be incompatible with those of the new country. This discovery may not be much of a shock to the members of the first generation Indian Americans, but it is certainly a source of anxiety for their children who passionately seek acculturation and integration.[25]

Moreover, a generation gap between father and son is visible on Gogol's fourteenth birthday. After the party is over, Gogol is listening to American music. Ashoke's entrance into Gogol's room is analogous to the first generation's intrusion into the lives of the second-generation immigrants. The music album by John, Paul, George and Ringo of whom Gogol is a devotee is in the sharp contrast to the cassette of classical Indian music that Ashoke has bought for Gogol, "still sealed in its wrapper." (p.78) Gogol's lukewarm response towards Indian classical music, demonstrates the second generation's indifference towards Indian culture and tradition. Gogol's eagerness to return to his lyrics (p.75) during his

confabulation with his father is equivalent to his aversion towards the interference of the older generation. By now, he is old enough to realise the peculiarity of his name that becomes an obstacle in the formation of his identity either as an Indian or as an American.

> He hates having to tell people that it doesn't mean any thing "in Indian". [...]. He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. He hates having to live with it, with a pet name turned good name, day after day, second after second. (p.76)

However, Ashoke Ganguli gave him the name that consolidated his Indian roots. Because of the peculiarity of his name, he does not court girls as other boys of his age had already started to. His first encounter with a girl takes place when he hides his name and introduces himself as Nikhil. Ironically, Gogol reverts to the culture of his ancestors to initiate the process of merging into American culture. He kisses a girl during a party for the first time in his life. From now on, he casts off his peculiar name, as well as the cultural values that he has inherited from his parents.

> It's the first time he's kissed anyone, the first time he's felt a girl's face and body and breath so close to his own. "I can't believe you kissed her, Gogol". His friends exclaim as they drive home from the party. He shakes his head in a daze, as astonished as they are, elation still welling inside him. "It wasn't me", he nearly says. But he doesn't tell them that it hadn't been Gogol who'd kissed Kim. That Gogol had had nothing to do with it. (p.96)

Jhumpa dichotomises the self of the protagonist Gogol. As Gogol, the son of Indian parents he has grudgingly imbibed cultural values and traditions. His response towards the tradition and culture of his parents is distasteful. As Nikhil,

he is integrated into American society. His angst towards his name Gogol, given by his parents, reflects his indifference towards his Indian roots as he considers his cultural roots an impediment to his acculturation. His parents' adherence to their Indian roots is an instance of contra-acculturation. He changes his name, and apparently, he feels relieved of the burden of bearing a ludicrous name as well as the burden of values and regulations, laid down by his parental culture.

> But now that he's Nikhil it's easier to ignore his parents, to tune out their concerns and pleas. [...] It is as Nikhil that he loses his virginity at a party at Ezra Stiles, with a girl wearing a plaid woollen skirt and combat boots and mustard tights. By the time he wakes up, hung-over, at three in the morning, she has vanished from the room, and he is unable to recall her name. (p.105)

Second generation American-Indians often demonize Indian culture. The parental indication that imbibing American values would not be appreciated by the conservative elders back home result in negative reactions. The more close he gets to American society, the more he is detached from his parents. Their constant endeavours to make him realise his Indianness serve as irritants. His courtship of Ruth, the girl he meets on the train represents another attempt to identify himself with American culture. His parents distrust and discourage his relationship with Ruth for they have witnessed the marital disharmony and consequent divorces in the lives of Bengali men married to American women. The termination of this love affair leaves Gogol depressed. Next, Gogol starts dating Maxine. Eventually he moves to Maxine's home that she shares with her parents. Gogol's affair with Maxine and his subsequent shifting to her parental home is his endeavour to erase the painful memories of his affair with Ruth. He also wants to forget everything

that pertains to his earlier days. He detaches himself totally from his parents. The sense of alienation from Indian culture makes him so disorientated that "He feels no nostalgia for the vacations he's spent with his family, and he realises now that they were never really true vacations at all. Instead they were overwhelming, disorienting expeditions, either going to Calcutta, or sightseeing in places they did not belong to and intended never to see again." (p.155)

In his pursuit of identity, he shuns everything that belongs to his parents. He spends his vacations with Maxine's family. He wants to be as far as possible from the remnant of his life as Gogol. The third person narrator points out that beneath his outward Americanness that he creates during his stay at Maxine's house, there lurks an Indian sensibility. The narrator comments, "...he is conscious of the fact that his immersion in Maxine's family is a betrayal of his own." The narrator proves to be true as the death of Ashoke Ganguli, his father, shakes him and he becomes conscious of his filial duties, incurred by his Indian heritage. He returns to his family in order to mourn his father's death. His attachment to his family serves as a jolt to his affair with Maxine. Gogol realises the cultural distance between himself and Maxine. He is aware that "his father's death does not affect Maxine in the least" (p.182) conversely, he has a wide circle of his father's Bengali acquaintances that are deeply moved by his father's death. Gogol notices Maxine's self-centred attitude even at the mourning of his father's death when she asks about his plan for New Year's Eve. Gogol now has the strength to not to succumb to Maxine's invitation of escape from his roots:

> "I miss you, Nikhil."
> He nods.

"What about New Year's Eve?" she says.
"What about it?"
"Do you still want to try to go up to New Hampshire?" For they had talked of this, going away together, just the two of them, Maxine picking him up after Christmas, staying at the lake house. Maxine was going to teach him how to ski.
"I don't think so."
"It might do you good," she says tilting her head to one side. She glances around the room. "To get away from all this."
"I don't want to get away." (p.182)

Consequently, Gogol faces another split in his affair due to the cultural differences, as Maxine could not understand his adherence to his family and cultural traditions. Eventually Maxine admits her dislike for Gogol's mother and sister that prompts Gogol to step out of Maxine's life forever. Gogol succumbs to his mother's pressure to get married. Ashima arranges his marriage with Moushumi. However, tragically this marriage also is subjected to disharmony and a consequent split owing to Moushumi's wayward attitude. She still dates Dimitri, her first love. This causes another failure in Gogol's life. Gogol tries to establish a relationship with Moushumi, on grounds of cultural similarity, but Moushumi's unruly sexual behaviour proves fatal to Gogol's marital life.

At the end of the novel, Gogol is bewildered and has no objective. The identity, he has created as Nikhil, provides no solace. He lives with a sense of failure and shame. All his endeavours to identify himself with American life end in a fiasco.

> Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will, once and for all, vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so, cease to exist. Yet the thought of this eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all. (p.289)

In short, Gogol epitomises existential traits, searching for his identity, living with a sense of alienation; he exemplifies the predicament of human life. Tejinder Kaur, in her article analyses Gogol's predicament.

> Gogol (Nikhil), though having passed through many emotional setbacks because of his 'bicultural' identity, is shown to be feeling dejected, distressed, displaced and lonely in the end not knowing what to do after thwarting of his dreams, his father's death, his wife's desertion and his mother's impending departure to India, but his desires to settle a home, have a family and a son and rise professionally in other countries hint at his quest for the new "route" which will dawn on him after his reflections in the company of the stories by his namesake, Nikolai Gogol-gifted to him by his father.[26]

The novel represents Gogol's attempts to piece together a fractured identity. He ultimately returns to where he started from. Rather than stop at the patriarchal identity, Jhumpa Lahiri takes him to the works of Gogol, his namesake.

Moushumi is another character who exemplifies existentialism. Gogol gets married to her in order to "enculturate his Bengali identity."[27] Moushumi shares the ethos of the second-generation Bengali immigrants. She is a research scholar, working on French Feminist Theory. Moushumi has a peculiar sense of alienation, as she neither opts for her parental Bengali identity, nor does she fully belong to American culture. Rather she goes to a third language and culture, in order to formulate her identity. She indulges in wayward behaviour and sexual adventures in France. During her stay in France, she had affairs with men of different nationalities. Like Gogol, she also had failed love affairs with Graham and Dimitri. The engagement with Graham breaks up due to the cultural

dissimilarity, for Graham ridicules Bengali cultural traditions that he had witnessed during his visit to Calcutta in order to ask for her grand parents' blessings. After the split, Moushumi gets married to Gogol, retreating from her previous vow "never to marry a Bengali man." (p.213) Her marriage is an attempt to bridge the gap between two cultures, however, it ends as she is disposed to sexual anarchy even after her marriage. Her relations with Dimitri Desjardins devastate her marital life. She establishes relations with Dimitri only to assert her individuality, as she does not want to be controlled by any outward agency. "In retrospect she saw that her sudden lack of inhibitions had intoxicated her more than any of the men had." (p.215) She embodies existential traits. From the beginning she does not belong either to the place of her birth, i.e. America, or to the place of her parents' origin i.e. Bengal. Moushumi's suffering is due to her hedonistic life style. In order to cash every moment of her life, she transcends the Rubicon of morality even in her conjugal life. Her dissoluteness is analogous to the meaning of her name because Moushumi is a season that keeps changing. The relationship between Gogol and Moushumi is void of love and mutual understanding; rather Moushumi is disenchanted and distracted from her marital life:

> They didn't argue, they still had sex, and yet he wondered. Did he still make her happy? She accused him of nothing, but more and more he sensed her distance, her dissatisfaction, her distraction. But there had been no time to dwell on this worry. [...] Part of him wants to bring it up with her. "Are you happy you married me?" he would ask. But the fact that he is even thinking of this question makes him afraid. (p.271)

Her urge for fulfilment leads her to establish sexual relations with Dimitri, her first love. The pangs of unfulfilment in the first affair remain afresh in her mind all through the years. Her disenchantment regarding marriage is a result of boredom. She resumes relations with Dimitri. Moushumi's efforts to trace Dimitri are described by the narrator as an act of self-deception.

> She tells herself she's calling an old friend. She tells herself the coincidence of finding his rėsumė, of stumbling upon him in this way, is too great, that any one in her position would pick up the phone and call. She tells herself he could very well be married, as she is. (p.262)

The narrator says that she feels pricks of conscience at the resumption of her relationship with Dimitri, though she suppresses it. In short, she is another character who consolidates Sartre's views that "man is born into a kind of void (le nėant), a mud (le visquex). He has the liberty to remain in this mud and thus lead a passive, supine, acquiescent existence in a "semi conscious" state in which he is scarcely aware of himself."[28] As an existentialist, Moushumi's actions are not governed by any outward agency and she has created her essence according to her existence. Despite her various sexual affairs, she is alienated even at last because Dimitri, for whom she ruined her marital life, is not going to marry her. Hence, her pursuit of self-satisfaction ends in utter failure as eventually she does not find the purpose of her life. As in her other works, Lahiri delineates how the second-generation immigrants blunder in their attempts to frame an identity. Often they are unable to get out of the in-between state.

Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli represent the first-generation Indian immigrants who come to USA in search of their fortunes. Both epitomize a sense

of alienation and strict adherence to native cultural values. Ashoke's dislocation from his native land and culture is due to his desire to pursue higher studies and find better future prospects "with security and respect." (p.108) Ashoke's migration specifies the phenomenon of 'brain drain'. As Ashoke's migration is purely for professional progress, he has a strong sense of acculturation. He easily overcomes all the odds in the course of his adjustment into American culture. Despite his disposition to adjust in the host culture, he has an affinity with his native Bengali cultural values and traditions. His efforts to socialize with other Bengali expatriates and the gatherings of Bengalis at his home to celebrate various Bengali traditions are due to his urge to stick to his ancestral, cultural roots. He wants to instil the values that he has inherited from his parents into his children in order to preserve his Bengali identity. His act of naming his son after Nikolai Gogol can be interpreted as his efforts to revive the memories of his past. Though these reminiscences are painful, they are an essential part of his psyche. The third person narrator does not delve into the depths of Ashoke's mind. The readers, however, encounter a strong sense of attachment to the country of his origin. In spite of his adjustment in America, his lonely death symbolizes the alienation of the diaspora in a foreign land. Ashoke's death raises a question in Gogol's mind regarding the existence of diaspora "...Who had forsaken everything to come to this country, to make a better life, only to die here?" (p.180) The question reveals an existential aspect of diasporic communities. Ashoke Ganguli, notwithstanding his strict adherence to cultural, moral values, dies in his pursuit of being identified as a successful professional but his dreams of leading a contented family life are shattered as at the time of his death he is

alone, converse to Calcutta where he has an extended family. From cultural view point, he is an amalgam of native Bengali and American cultures.

Ashima Ganguli is an archetypal Bengali immigrant woman who strictly observes Bengali cultural values and abhors the Americanized ways. At the outset of the novel, she typifies loneliness, isolation and nostalgia. From the feminist view point, she consolidates the patriarchal niche of women. Her concern and attempts to conserve her native culture presents her as an emblem of Indian culture, as the patriarchy has assigned responsibility of cultural preservation to women. Her concern and adherence to the native traditions can be construed as her attempts to keep her family space culturally unadulterated from the profane activities of the host culture. She represents the traditions and rituals observed strictly by the family and hence she represents the inner domain for women as prescribed by the patriarchy:

> In portraying Ashima's experiences and her diasporic translocation, there is no attempt to visualize a Utopian condition where societal structures would guarantee women their rightful place in society. Ashima does not seem to realize her condition: the inequitable distribution of power within the family structure. A total acceptance of the situation makes Ashima a conformist to the core. The concept of a visionary, futurist thought for women that Einstein had envisaged does not figure in Ashima's thought process. Women's subordination is an accepted 'given' for her.[29]

From the beginning she conforms to the patriarchal norms of a daughter. a wife, and a mother. She sticks to the duties of a widow to her late husband. Through Ashima, Lahiri portrays the status of a widow in Indian culture. She has to abandon all the embellishments. Widowhood in Hindu society has ever been a scourge for women. Widows remain at the margins of society. Kautilya's *Arthshastra* and *Manusmriti* imposed various harsh sanctions on widows. Despite

various social reforms to enhance the status of widows in Hindu society, they are destined to lead a life of social ostracism. A widow is disallowed not only the use of ornaments and embellishments but also the use of honey, meat, salt, perfumes, flowers, and dyed clothes. They are not permitted to re-marry. In order to disfigure their beauty, their heads are forcibly tonsured. Hundreds of widows are ostracized by their families and sent to Vrindavan, a religious place in Uttar Pradesh to spend time in prayer. These widows have only one piece of cloth to cover themselves, and beg outside the temples. Their marginalization is not only economic and social; rather they are subjected to the most degrading marginalization in the form of prostitution by some widow Ashrams.

As a daughter, her acquiescence towards the patriarchal norms is apparent as her marriage is arranged by her parents, without asking her approval. The intensity of marginalization can be gauged by the fact that "It was only after the betrothal that she'd learnt his name" (p.9). As a wife she is left alone to suffer the trauma of exile at her apartment. At the time of delivery, Jhumpa Lahiri delineates her apprehensions for her baby as she has not adjusted yet in the alien land of America.

> But She is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare... (p.6)...As she strokes and suckles and studies her son, she can't help but pity him. She has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived. (p.25)

Ashima remains in the house (inner domain) representing the patriarchal apprehension that the women are more susceptible towards cultural denigration or cultural contamination. However Lahiri does not present any gender discrimination on financial and educational basis, rather her concern is culture, so she represents the issue of gender only in the cultural context. Despite her long stay in America, she stills wears saris, likes Indian food, observes every Bengali tradition. The acquaintances of Ganguli family are mostly the Bengali

immigrants. This signifies the family's attempts to stick to their roots. Lahiri shows a slow process of adjustment in the character of Ashima. Her desperation and the trauma of exile lead her to persuade Ashoke to leave USA and return 'home':

> "I'm saying hurry up and finish your degree." And then, impulsively, admitting it for the first time: "I'm saying I don't want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It's not right. I want to go back. (p.33)

But as time passes she adjusts. However adjustment to America is slower than her husband's. The birth of Gogol accelerates the process of her adjustment, though initially she is terrified to raise the child in an alien country. Necessities compel her to contact the outside world. As soon as she participates in the outside realm, her nostalgia and sense of exile recedes. Her family connections in Calcutta haunt her time and again in the form of the news of the deaths of near and dear ones. The first trauma of mourning that she undergoes is her father's death. The plight of the diaspora, represented by Ashima is well portrayed by the narrator. Ashima realizes that being a foreigner "is a sort of life long pregnancy – a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding". (pp.49-50) Ashima harbours a strong urge to link with the relatives back 'home' in Calcutta. Her continual visits to Calcutta attach her roots to the soil of her motherland. She eagerly waits for the letters from 'home'. Indira Nityanandam minutely observes the dilemma of immigrants,

> Constantly suspended in a mental voyage between the countries, they seem to be caught in an enigmatic state of in-betweenness. These expatriates keep the channels of communication open between themselves and their families back home.[30]

The family visits to Calcutta open a rift between the first and second generations as Ashok and Ashima come to Calcutta to revive the memories. In contrast, their children have an aversion towards India and treat it as an alien land having no emotional propinquity except the feeling that it is the land of their ancestors.

Despite her long stay in U.S. Ashima is indisposed to internalize the American way of life and does not comprehend her offsprings' fascination towards it. Though she gradually adjusts, adapts and adopts it as she has learnt to do the things on her own. During Ashoke's deputation at a university in Cleveland, she learns to cope with the solitude on her own. Meanwhile, she gets a job to while away the time. Another thing that offends her is "her children's independence, their need to keep distance from her." (P-166) She dislikes this liberty as this is in contrast to the Indian notion of an integrated family. Lahiri delves deep in Ashima's mind for she is the main character who projects cultural displacement and the trauma of exile. Her character posits existential characteristics because she is in constant search for identity and belonging. After the death of Ashoke, she is still in a dilemma. Even at the end, she is portrayed as a lonely character. The narrator exposes the inner workings of her mind: "Ashima feels lonely suddenly, horribly, permanently alone, and briefly, turned away from the mirror she sobs for her husband."(p.278) In order to bridge the gap with her

relatives back home, owing to distances, she decides to spend six months in India. Simultaneously to keep alive the memories of her husband, she will spend six months in America. In the last chapter, the narrator depicts the predicament of Ashima: "True to the meaning of her name, she will be without borders, without a home of her own, a resident everywhere and nowhere." (p.276)

The character of Sonia embodies acculturation. Her character is not portrayed in detail. She is well adjusted in American culture and does not suffer from identity crisis. Her sense of belongingness consolidates her efforts of identity formation, albeit she does not cast off Indian values as unlike Moushumi, Ruth and Maxine, she does not have several love affairs.

Lahiri has projected various themes in the novel. Besides the dilemma of belongingness, sense of exile, feminism and existentialism, she has presented the problems of American insensitivity in the novel. The immigrants are not recognized as American. They are ridiculed for the peculiarity of names by the natives. Gogol realizes this marginalization and humiliation when somebody shortens the spelling of Ganguli into Gang, written on the nameplate of the mailbox. He also realizes that his father's Indian accent makes him a butt of ridicule and marginalized.

Another issue, Jhumpa Lahiri posits is race. The colour of skin is a bottleneck in the course of their identity formation in the host culture. Notwithstanding their acquiescence to the pressures of the host culture and their consequent assimilation in it, race becomes an impediment in being recognized as American. Gogol's confabulation with Pamela at a party, unfolds American

psyche towards India and Indians living abroad. Pamela represents the fascination of Americans for Indian culture. In a neo colonial stance, they consider India, only as a country of adverse climate and dirt as well as unusual customs and cultures. Gogol, in order to identify himself with Americans, bolsters Pamela's views. His views on climatic disorders in India are based on the same logic.

> "I mean, you must never get sick."
>
> "Actually, that's not true," he says, slightly annoyed. He looks over at Maxine, trying to catch her eye, but she's speaking intently with her neighbor. "We get sick all the time. We have get shots before we go. My parents devote the better part of a suitcase to medicine."
> "But you're Indian," Pamela says frowning. "I'd think the climate would'nt affect you, given your heritage."
> "Pamela, Nick's American," Lydia says. (p.157)

Graham is another character who embodies the white disregard and contempt for the culture of India. His disrespect and humiliation of Indian culture becomes raison d'être of rift between him and Moushumi. Graham represents an age-old superiority, treating third world countries as uncivilized, orthodox, and circumscribed to the cocoons of their cultures. Lahiri has presented a strange type of consciousness in Moushumi regarding her heritage. Though she is disposed to American way of life, she cannot tolerate the rejection of her background: "For it was one thing for to reject her background, to be critical of her family's heritage, another to hear it from him". (p.217) Moushumi's disgust with Graham evinces that the second generation immigrants, somehow are tied to their ancestral roots and despite their disorientation towards the culture of ancestors, they are ambivalent towards it.

The title story of the collection *Unaccustomed Earth* presents shades of complexity in the relationship of a retired father and his daughter Ruma. Ruma is living in Seattle with her American husband and son Akash. After her mother's death, her father retires. In order to do away with isolation, he travels distant places of Europe, where he had never been. Before his next visit to Prague, Ruma's father visits her in Seattle. The whole story revolves round his visit to Seattle where inner workings of both of the characters are minutely depicted. Ruma and her father are the two central characters who live their lives in their own ways and do not want any interference. The complexity in the relationship between Ruma and her father is depicted through psychological analysis. Ruma's father sells the large house that he shared with his wife and shifts to a condominium. On one European trip, he meets Mrs. Bagchi, a Bengali woman who was widowed at the age of twenty six. He establishes propinquity and hides this new relationship from Ruma.

Ruma's relationship with her father has not been harmonious. It has been a biological relationship between a father and daughter, void of emotional closeness. The only mediator between her and her father was her mother who is dead now. Ruma is deeply moved by the news of the sale of her parental house to which her childhood memories were attached. Ruma, during her pre-marital life was disposed to the western way of life and did not want any meddling from her father while selecting either her subjects of study or her life partner. Notwithstanding persistent disapproval of her parents, she got married to an

American boy Adam. Her father's authoritative attitude filled her with aversion towards him as when he visits her; she conjectures that he wants to live with her:

> Ruma feared that her father would become a responsibility, an added demand, continuously present in a way she was no longer used to. It would mean an end to the family she'd created on her own: herself and Adam and Akash, and the second child that would come in January, conceived just before the move. (p.7)

Ruma's assumptions about her father are based on her sense of individualism, an essential feature of western life. Though her father is well aware of Ruma's attitude, her independence and individualism, he regards it as retribution of time since he left behind his parents in India. Lahiri presents the predicament of immigrants through Ruma's father, who leave their relatives back in India in the pursuit of better future prospects. But in this pursuit, the next generation delinks from its values and culture, as conspicuous through the attitude of his off springs.

During her father's visit, Ruma perceives changes. He establishes proximity with Ruma's son Akash, cultivates her desolate garden and plants hydrangea in the memory of his late wife. Ruma now offers a permanent home to him but he declines. He wishes to visit when the baby is born. After his departure Ruma comes to know about Mrs. Bagchi through a lost picture post card, addressed to Mrs. Bagchi written by her father. She comes to know "the reason for her father's trips, the reasons for his good spirits, the reason he did not want to live in Seattle."(p.58) Ruma is mortified with grief and astonished and wants to tear the postcard into pieces but eventually she inhibits herself and posts the card to Mrs. Bagchi. Ruma is delineated as an educated and enlightened lady. Her attitude

towards her father's secret love affair is sympathetic as she finally understands the isolation that her father is experiencing after her mother's death.

Notwithstanding Ruma's independent life, free from the diktats of her parents, she somehow, is connected to her Bengali roots through her mother. Her concern over Akash's upbringing reflects her cultural ties to the land of her parents:

> In spite of her efforts he was turning into the sort of American child she was always careful not to be, the sort that horrified and intimidated her mother: imperious, afraid of eating things. (p.23)

Akash's refusal of Indian food symbolizes his growing refusal of imbibing Indian culture. Ruma's decision to rear her own children is also in defiance of bearing the double reponsibilities of household and job simultaneously. Hence Ruma's decision inverts a stereotype of housewife.

Ruma's mother is presented as a conformist to the patriarchal niche of a wife. She marries Ruma's father and migrates to USA mutely. Her mother is a quintessence of Bengali culture as she sticks to traditional clothes, speaks Bengali and wants to instill cultural values in Ruma.

The second story *Hell–Heaven* is narrated by a small girl Usha with adult hindsight. The narrator dscribes her mother's migration to U.S. and her mother's crush on Pranab Kaku, a fellow immigrant. The narrator lives with her mother Aparna and her father. Aparna's marriage to Shyamal is arranged and void of emotions, and understanding. Aparna's romance with Pranab is ensued by her

husband's indifference and lukewarm response to Aparna's emotions. The narrator subtly comments upon her father's peculiar attitude towards his mother:

> He had married my mother to placate his parents; they were willing to accept his desertion as long as he had a wife. He was wedded to his work, his research, and he existed in a shell that neither my mother nor I could penetrate. Conversation was a chore for him; it required an effort he preferred to expand at the lab. (p.65)

Pranab Kaku comes as an oasis in the arid life of Aparna. Despite her adherence to cultural norms, Aparna is compelled to defy the norms of society by committing "sexual deviance". Her non-conformist act of romance with Pranab is due to her patriarchal oppression and is attributed as her assertion of female sexuality. Her desolate marital life shatters the false euphoria of marriage, presented by the society. But her romance with Pranab ends with the advent of Deborah in the life of Pranab. Aparna is upset and hopes that sooner or later, Deborah will leave Pranab. But Deborah gets married to Pranab. With the passage of time Pranab becomes secluded and rarely visits the parties among his Bengali acquaintance. People assume that Deborah is the root cause of Pranab's seclusion from his acquaintance. But after twenty three years of marriage, Pranab and Deborah divorce due to Pranab's love affair with a married Bengali woman. Deborah shares her grief with Aparna on phone and reveals that it was Pranab himself who cut off all the ties with his Bengali acquaintances. Deborah was falsely accused of doing so. Through the portrayal of two broken hearted women Aparna and Deborah, Lahiri poses that women, be they Indian or American, are susceptible to the patriarchal oppression. She also projects that women bond easily and stand by each other. Irrespective of their different cultural background,

both Aparna and Deborah unite, due to the shared experiences of the oppressive patriarchy. Apart from feminism, Lahiri has also presented cultural clash in the story. Aparna wants to instill Bengali culture and tradition in the narrator whereas the narrator's aversion to the restrictions laid down upon her, initiates cultural clash. Being an emblem of Bengali culture, initially Aparna wants to keep her family space uncontaminated from the western culture. Her exhortations to the narrator to remain aloof from the boys of her age, is a conspicuous example of Aparna's endeavours to keep intact her cultural heritage. Conversely, the narrator's propinquity with Deborah in her childhood foreshadows the narrator's impulse to imbibe the host culture in her youth. Aparna's restraints on the narrator, in her youth, made Aparna more secluded owing to her adherence of Bengali culture. Her adherence opens a rift between her and the narrator. Aparna already was aloof from her husband, due to his devotion to work. The only companion in the family was the narrator, who began to evade her, in order to enjoy her life on her own.

> I began to pity my mother; the older I got, the more I saw what a desolate life she led. She had never worked; enduring the day she watched soap operas to pass the time. Her only job, everyday, was to clean and cook for my father and me. We rarely went to restaurant, my father always pointing out, even in cheap ones, how expensive they were compared with eating at home. When my mother complained to him about how much she hated life in the suburbs and how lonely she felt, he said nothing to placate her. (p.76)

Eventually Aparna realizes that the narrator is not only her daughter "but a child of America as well" (p.82) and hence the process of acculturation is inevitable it cannot be curbed by her restraints and her effort to check the

acculturation of the narrator makes herself secluded and aloof. By this time, she and her husband grow old and establish a proximity that had been absent throughout their lives.

A Choice of Accomodation deals with the staleness in the marital life of Amit, a Bengali migrant and his American wife Megan. Amit is an editor of a medical journal who comes to his alma mater Langford, accompanying his wife, in order to attend Pam Borden's wedding. Amit's visit to Langford, as described by the narrator, is not to revive his memories of Langford where he had studied at the age of fifteen but to do away with rust that is pervading their relationship owing to their routined lives. Amit's reaction is lukewarm towards the invitation of Langford alumni reunion. Amit's life exemplifies generational conflict. He is bewildered by his father's decision to return to India and leave him at Langford. His parents' decision left him unsupervised, and uncared for among the strangers.

> He was crippled with homesickness, missing his parents to the point where tears often filled his eyes, in those first months, without warning. [...] He learned to live without his mother and father, as every else did, shedding his daily dependence on them even though he was still a boy, and even to enjoy it. Still, he refused to forgive them. (p.97)

During his stay at Langford, Amit suffers a sense of alienation because of the colour of his skin as other students do not recognize him as an American. Amit's decision to drop out of medical school and his subsequent marriage with Megan, are in defiance of his parents' wishes and signify generational conflict. But his racial alienation that he suffered from at Langford still haunts him after his marriage as both of his daughters inherit the complexion of their white

mother. The mustiness in the conjugal life is attributed to job commitments and familial responsibilities of both Megan and Amit. His decision to attend Pam's wedding arouses Megan's suspicion regarding his feelings for Pam. In order to get away from the staleness and familial responsibilities, he attends the marriage of Pam with his wife. Disabled by alcohol, he blatantly shares his ideas regarding the predicament of marital life, with a stranger Felicia. He ends the party in between, leaving Megan behind. This makes his relations with Megan tense. But their love-making at Langford makes them realize the essence of accommodation and adjustment in conjugal life. They make love in a dorm in an unusual manner, peculiar to married people of their age as both of them have crossed forty. Through this love making, they revive passion for each other.

Only Goodness deals with the relationship between Sudha and her alcoholic brother Rahul. Through the story Lahiri sheds light on the expectations of first generation immigrants from their American born offsprings, as well as cultural susceptibility of the second generation immigrants. The story highlights the twist in the relationship between the siblings. The story starts with Sudha's imminent acculturation. Sudha is an educated character like the other women of *Unaccustomed Earth*, with an irrepressible urge to imbibe western ideas and ways of life. It was her errant attitude during her student life that led Rahul astray. Lahiri discusses the different aspects of the great American dream. The first generation maintained a great loyalty to their motherland. The second generation in their attempts to define an identity created a third space. The predicament of Rahul is central to the story as it signifies the generation gap. Cultural denigration

of the second generation immigrants is a much discussed phenomenon in Lahiri's works. Both Sudha and Rahul are entangled in conflict with their parents regarding the cultural norms of their ancestral land that are too exotic and far-fetched to be practiced in the west. Sudha's refusal to be encumbered by the cultural norms of her parents leads Rahul to opt for the same distancing from the parental culture. But Sudha's imbibing of host culture is positive in a way as she establishes herself and does not tussle with her parents. On the other hand Rahul's acculturation is negative for he is irresponsible towards his career and rebels against his parents:

> Sudha had waited until college to disobey her parents. Before then she had lived according to their expectations, her persona scholarly, her social life limited to other demure girls in her class, if only to ensure that one day she would be set free. [...] But she learned what her limits were. The idea of excess, of being out of control, did not appeal to Sudha. Competence: this was the trait that fundamentally defined her. (p.129)

Her parents' approval of her marriage with Roger, evinces the capitulation of the first generation immigrants to the pressures of host culture. But in Rahul's case, her parents are adamant not to accept Elena as Rahul's wife and hence their dreams for Rahul are devastated when he leaves the house. Her parents' departure to Calcutta, presents the disenchantment of the first generation immigrants from the alien land and culture of the west. The concluding part of the story, presents Rahul's resolve to improve himself but eventually he fails to give up his alcoholism and in an alcoholic stupor he leaves his small nephew Neel unsupervised in a bathtub. The gross negligence and his incapability to improve

offend Roger and Sudha and finally in a state of resentment and despair, Sudha ousts him from her house.

The story explains the cultural disorientation of Sudha and Rahul as well as cultural displacement of their parents ensued by migration in search of a happy and luxurious life. The alienation of the first generation immigrants is exacerbated by their offsprings as the second generation distances itself from the first generation in order to evade the cultural pressures and demand of excellent academic performance. The offsprings for whom the first generation migrates do not provide any emotional solace as Rahul blatantly calls his parents' migration purely for material gain. But Sudha's attitude, being a woman is sympathetic and humane for her parents as she comprehends their alienation, and isolation in a far away country.

> While Sudha regarded her parents' separation from India as an ailment that ebbed and flowed like a cancer, Rahul was impermeable to that aspect of their life as well. " No one dragged them here," he would say. "Baba left India to get rich, and Ma married him because she had nothing else to do." That was Rahul, always aware of the family's weaknesses, never sparing Sudha from the things she least wanted to face. (p.138)

Apart from cultural disorientation and displacement, the narrator points out the stigma of racism that the immigrants undergo. Sudha's parents experience marginalization in the form of racism besides much hyped notion of equality in the western countries. Racism, an abominable marginalization is a notable feature of migration. From feminist view point, Lahiri has posited the characters of Sudha and Rahul with contrary features. Sudha, as a feminine figure, despite her acculturation creates her identity as a liberated, educated woman, responsible for

her familial as well as filial duties, whereas Rahul, a masculine figure, is portrayed with negative traits; truant and negligent to his academic career as well as filial duties. Even his resolve to overcome his alcoholic addiction proves to be as frail as himself in the end.

Nobody's Business delineates acculturation of a Bengali immigrant Sangeeta alias Sang and her failed love affair with Farouk, an Egyptian historian, teaching at Harvard. Sang, a Harvard dropout lives with two house mates, Paul and Heather. The story is narrated by a third person narrator. Sang is offended by the continuous phone calls of her suitors from distant places expressing convoluted assumptions about her. Sangeeta's persistence to call herself Sang, reflects her disorientation from her cultural roots as by adopting this name, she wants to create an identity that is neither Indian nor American. She does not like any interference in her life and wants to live it her own way. She views these proposals as invasions on her privacy and believes that these suitors are pursuing her out of the desire to have an educated, beautiful and economically independent wife in order to maintain their social status:

> These men weren't really interested in her. They were interested in a mythical creature created by a chain of gossip, a web of wishful Indian-community thinking in which she was an aging, overlooked poster child for years of bharat natyam classes, perfect SATs. (p.176)

Sang refutes these proposals because she yearns for love, but eventually is betrayed by her Egyptian boyfriend who consumes her as a sexual object. At the end of the story, Sang stands alone. Lahiri portrays her as a modern woman who

no longer chases dreams and has the ability to survive by herself in the public sphere.

The last three stories are sequential and deal with the complications of Hema's and Kaushik's lives. *Once in a Lifetime* presents the teenage infatuation of Hema for Kaushik, and the displacement of Kaushik and subsequent problems of adjustment ensued by his parents' oscillation between U.S. and India. However the return of Kaushik's family to U.S. is not for financial motives, rather his mother's fatal breast cancer and her will to die in America, in an isolated place, leads the family to undergo a second migration. Kaushik stays with his parents at Hema's house until his father buys a house. The information regarding the quotidian life of Kaushik and his parents are very secretive and deal with the predicament of the family. Kaushik's sullen attitude towards his parents is attributed to the vacillation of his family between the countries. Born in U.S., he was disposed to American culture and tradition at the time of his departure from U.S. to India. Even in India, he stays in Bombay, a distant place from Calcutta, where he does not find the culture of his ancestors; hence, he does not belong to India. Moreover his mother's fatal disease fills in him a sense of isolation and alienation. Nevertheless he wants to belong to America. As far as Kaushik's mother is concerned, her fatal illness fills in her hedonism, she wants to grab some pleasure out of the cruel hands of death. But her pursuit of pleasure is criticized by Hema's parents. Hema's mother, unaware of the predicament of the family, considers the self indulgence of Kaushik's mother as 'stylish'. She, in contrast to Kaushik's mother, has a strong adherence to Bengali culture and tradition and acts obsequiously according to the niche of preserver of indigenous Bengali culture that the Indian patriarchy has incurred upon her. Her efforts to

keep her family space uncontaminated from the western culture are apparent in her disapproval of American attire and idea of a child sleeping alone in a separate room. Hema, the narrator, also reveals her emblematic attitude of second generation immigrants towards the land and culture of their ancestors. Her negligence of Indian geography and aversion towards India as a land of geckos, and cockroaches, presents a nasty outlook of second generation immigrants, as well as presents their attitude towards third world countries, as a land of filth, dirt and insects:

> I did not betray my opinion that I found trips to India dull, that I didn't like the geckos that clung to the walls in the evenings, poking in and out of the fluorescent light fixtures, or the giant cockroaches that sometimes watched me as I bathed. (p.241)

Year's End presents the devastation of Kaushik after his mother's death. Kaushik returns to his home from Swarthmore after his father calls him to meet Chitra, his step mother. Chitra, a young widow half the age of Kaushik's father, migrates to U.S. with her two young daughters Usha and Piu. Kaushik accentuates the differences in living standards between Chitra and his mother by elaborately explaining his visit home:

> I was unused, stepping into the house, to the heavy smell of cooking that was in the air...My mother had insisted on furnishing the house with pieces true to its Modernist architecture...She had never allowed a cloth to cover the table, but one was there now, something with an Indian print that could just as easily have been a bedspread and did'nt fully reach either end. In the centre, instead of the generous cluster of fresh fruit or flowers my mother would have arranged, there was a stainless-steel plate... jars of pickles, hot mango and sweet lime, their lids missing, their labels stained, spoons stuck into their oils. (pp.258-259)

Lahiri has adroitly presented an age old patriarchal prejudice of step motherhood with which Kaushik is occupied, albeit his western outlook towards life. Chitra and her daughters undergo the stigma of stephood as Kaushik does not want to let them touch the belongings of his mother. His emotions at the news of his father's marriage are not outrageous, yet he never welcomes his father's decision:

> But no turbulent emotion passed through me as he spoke, only a diluted version of the nauseating sensation that had taken hold the day in Bombay that I learned my mother was dying, a sensation that had dropped anchor in me and never fully left.(p.254)

Despite differences, Kaushik identifies himself with the girls on the basis of similar experiences of migration and loss of their father and his mother respectively. However, Chitra's and her daughter's efforts to provide Kaushik some emotional solace, are shunned by him. He rejects Chitra, as "a cheap replacement for his exclusive mother."[31] In order to revive his memory alienated from the access of Chitra and her daughter, he wishes to eliminate every trace of his mother from his house. His pent up revulsion is expressed at the time of his quarrel with Piu and Usha, when the duo look at the photographs of his mother. Eventually, he abandons home, and like an escapist, drifts from place to place in search of peace. Chitra and her daughters are presented as passive sufferers of the patriarchy, but the silence of Usha and Piu in the concluding part, makes Kaushik realize his guilt hence their refusal is construed as their refusal "to collaborate with the oppressor and thus weaken the process of victimization."[32]

Going Ashore, presents denouement of the previous two stories. It consists of a huge component of tragedy and is told in a calm manner, but the unhighlighted component lingers long and disturbs the readers. Hema exemplifies the same sense of unbelongingness and search for identity that Kaushik has undergone. Breaking up her affair with Julian, Hema succumbs to the pressures of life and desires to get married. Hema's drift signifies her escapist attitude as she wants to avoid memories of her love-affair with Julian as well as the thoughts of her future married life with Navin. At first she is hopeful that Julian's divorce is a matter of time and sooner or later she would settle with Julian. But she realizes that her love affair with Julian would only diminish her status as a mistress. Her visit to Rome is her effort to create her own identity, free from the traces of her past and future. She does not have any emotional attachment to Navin except that he is her fiancé. Her decision of marriage does not reflect any enthusiasm:

> Like the young smiling couple sitting affectionately on top of a shared casket, there was something dead about the marriage she was about to enter into. And though she knew it had every chance, over the years, of coming to life, on her way home, in the yellow light of evening, she was conscious only of its deadness. (p.301)

During her visit to Rome she meets Kaushik after a long gap. Her childhood infatuation for Kaushik flares up again, consequently despite her betrothal; she establishes sexual relations with Kaushik who works as a freelance photographer. Kaushik proposes to Hema to follow him to Hong Kong, breaking her engagement to Navin. But Hema shuns his offer, realizing that her pursuit of Kaushik, has no guarantee of better future prospects. Instead she prefers married

life, albeit she has no love for Navin. Hema's rejection of Kaushik's proposal can be construed as her blow to the patriarchy as;

> Patriarchy dictates that women follow behind men in the exterior, open-ended world. Hema's refusal to follow Kaushik questions the idea of 'women's space' and disrupts conservative societal norms. By retaining her job, Hema negotiates her position in society. Hema redefines woman as a being who rather than succumbing to oppressive forces writes her own destiny. Thus Lahiri explores the space within the literary text as vehicle for organizing and understanding women's lives.[33]

Both Hema and Kaushik are emblematic of existential traits; they behave as isolated existence, searching for their identities in an alien universe. Both are rootless owing to their disporic existence, and vicissitudes of life instill in them a sense of alienation. Eventually Kaushik dies in Tsunami, leaving no trace of his existence behind. Hema also drifts into marriage that is meaningless and void of love as well as mutual understanding. She wields marriage as a tool to counter the patriarchal onslaught on an unmarried woman.

In short, Jhumpa Lahiri subtly presents the universal saga of a section of humanity that is loss of identity, the sense of belonging and cultural displacement. Her characters are expatriates from South Asia, who want to connect either to their host country or to the country of their origin. But in doing so, they suffer from a sense of alienation from both countries. Feminine identity is affected more than masculine identity by cultural displacement because of women's strong cultural ties to the land of their ancestors in the comparison to their male counterparts. Women are a part of private sphere, whereas men are a part of public sphere. Jhumpa Lahiri's women tend to maintain a philosophical attitude

towards life. The prominent feature of Jhumpa's oeuvre is generational conflict between immigrants. The first generation's urge to stick to their roots is in contrast to the second generation's eagerness to merge with the host culture. The second generation carves out a different identity which has to be understood on the basis of their psychological assessment. Firstly, second generation immigrants do not deem India as their 'home'; secondly, their vision of America, is contrary to the first generation as second generation immigrants regard America as their 'home'; thirdly, since they feel 'at home' in America, they identify themselves with American norms and attitudes. Fourthly, their vision of life is individualistic and conforms to the American ways of life. Lahiri poses culture as an impetus in the lives of her characters. Whether it is Shoba and Shukumar, Mr. Pirzada and Lilia's parents, they are concomitant only on the basis of shared cultural experiences. It is the same cultural background that saves Shoba's and Shukumar's marriage from splitting. Though the characters are fictional, their predicament and experiences are universal. As far as identity is concerned, characters have different notions of identity; it is not circumscribed to culture. For instance, Mr. Pirzada's identity is attached to his family, whereas Boori Ma's notion of identity is associated with her lost financial status, Sanjeev's endeavours to create his identity are governed by his religion, Twinkle's attempt to create her identity is free from any obsession, rather it is her own impulse to create her identity free from the diktats of any outward reason. Similarly Bibi Haldar at first tries to create her identity according to the norms of the patriarchy but having failed to do so, she creates her identity according to her own parameters, though the course she takes is deviant from prescribed norms. The narrator of *The Third*

and Final Continent has a strong sense of belonging to the land of his ancestors; simultaneously he wants his son to maintain Bengali cultural identity in his course of assimilation into host culture. Mrs. Sen exemplifies cultural displacement and the inability to cope with the changed atmosphere and life patterns of the host country. She debunks the notion that western culture is universally acceptable and applicable.

Similar predicament of the first generation and second generation immigrants is presented in *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*. Lahiri has presented gender issues in cultural context. Feminine characters undergo this trauma of exile more than masculine characters. Women characters are more concerned regarding cultural preservation in comparison to their male counterparts. The patriarchal stereotype of women as preserver of indigenous culture is minutely depicted through the attempts of female characters to maintain their cultural heritage. Ashima, in *The Namesake* presents fear of loss of identity in the host country. The process of her acculturation is slower than her husband Ashoke.

Apart from cultural displacement, and identity crisis, Lahiri presents existential traits in her characters. Moushumi, Gogol in *The Namesake*, and Kaushik in *Unaccustomed Earth*, embody perfect existential characteristics. They search for their identity in a Godless universe, and their actions and lives are not governed by any outward agency. The characters behave as if they are thrown into an incongruous universe, and they are bewildered by the pulls and pressures of their lives. The predicament of the first generation immigrants is intensified by

their second generation as the second generation is rebellious and at odds with their parents and do not succumb to the demands of the first generation to adhere to their ancestral culture. A sharp contrast between the first and second generation immigrants is apparent in their search for life partners. Ruma, in *Unaccustomed Earth* marries an American, showing her predilection for American culture; on the other hand, her father turns to a Bengali widow in his last days. Similarly Kaushik's father marries a Bengali widow rather than an American. On the other hand, some of Lahiri's second generation immigrant women like Sang and Hema look for or are engaged to Indian grooms but in the meantime they continue their American affairs. Kaushik's parents are the exceptional first generation immigrants as they are very much American in their ways of life. The attitude of Kaushik's father towards Kaushik is insensitive; he does not comprehend the predicament of Kaushik after his mother's death. In a neo-colonial stance Lahiri, presents marginalization of immigrants. Despite their strong sense of acculturation, the immigrants are not recognized as Americans because of the colour of their skin. The immigrants are subjected to marginalization owing to the notion of 'cultural other' or 'ethnic other'. Jhumpa Lahiri, as a post-modern writer simply presents the maladies or problems of human existence due to migration, not remedies or solutions to these problems.

Lahiri has presented children as minute observers in her stories. Their vision is untainted from the adult's prejudices of 'cultural other' or exoticism. Asha Chaubay[34] comments on Jhumpa's projection of the food metaphor in her works. Food plays a vital role in preserving immigrants' national and cultural

identity. In short, Jhumpa beautifully carves out the dilemma of immigrants and presents their dilemma as their maladies. The characters suffer this dilemma, their predicaments are different. As mentioned earlier, the characters have different parameters of identity crises. Apart from culture, Lahiri successfully presents human psyche and various themes related to it, like themes of marriage, love, fidelity and feminist issues. As far as feminist identity is concerned Mrs. Das' infidelity is an assertion as her physical needs were neglected. Similarly, Moushumi's wayward attitude and sexual exploits are the outcome of her ultra feminist consciousness; Bibi Haldar's deviational sexual relations assert her feminist identity and non-conformist attitude. Twinkle's fascination for Christian paraphernalia is non conformist and in contrast to Sanjeev's normative attitude and consciousness of his Hindu identity. Hema's denial of Kaushik's proposal to follow him, enunciates her subversion of patriarchal norms.

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Chapter-Six

Conclusion

The four women authors, in their works present cultural displacement and feminine identity with special focus on women's marginalized status. Rokeya's treatment of cultural displacement evinces oppressed women in pre-independence India. Rokeya's feminist ideas were much ahead of her western counterparts. It can be argued that Rokeya paved the way for third world feminism. She exhibits the nexus of patriarchy and colonialism. Rokeya's feminist concerns are not merely theoretical rather in practice she has executed her feminist agenda. Culturally displaced characters in her two utopias represent every strata of society. Unlike the modernist strategy of merely presenting the problem, Rokeya presents the panacea to end gender subordination. Her feminist agenda is not limited to her own community or to her own social strata; rather it encompasses downtrodden and oppressed women of every community. In order to show the mirror to the hyped liberation of English women, she presents the plight of Helen Horace. Helen is not only subjected to the patriarchal tyranny of her husband, but she is also victimized by the legal oppression of so-called civilized England. Like a radical feminist, Rokeya rejects the patriarchy altogether and holds it responsible for the plight and miseries of women. She stresses the need of a new social and political structure to end gender oppression. Under the domination of colonialism and patriarchy, women's emancipation seemed unattainable. Her women characters try to create feminine identities free from the diktats of patriarchy. Rokeya dismantles the bias that feminism and Islam are contradictory to each other. She, in order to reinforce her claim of gender equality, takes recourse of religious scriptures. Rokeya proves that western feminist discourse

is not universally applicable. Her writings appeared at a time when in US and UK first wave feminism was at its peak. The needs of working class women, poor women and women of colour were neglected. Rokeya's writings insisted on 'sisterhood' in comparison to her western contemporaries who were limited to the issues of middle class educated women.

In *Sultana's Dream,* Rokeya rejects men altogether, but in *Padamarag,* her vision widens and she stresses a harmonious relationship between men and women. She underscores that women's economic disparity leads to dependence on men and ultimately women are marginalized and oppressed. In order to eliminate disparities and oppression of women, she emphasizes women's economic parity as well as vocational education for women. By achieving economic independence, the sisters of Tarini Bhavan create their identity as well as resist cultural displacement (i.e. restraints on their intellectual development). These women use their full potential in constructing a society free from patriarchal norms and colonial domination. Rokeya instills in her female characters self confidence as well as realization of their capabilities. The protagonist Siddika in *Padamarag* emerges as a new woman who is at odds with the patriarchally defined role of a woman. In short, Rokeya's feminist approach paved the way for modern feminism.

Attia Hosain's feminist concern also encompasses women of every strata of society. Attia's writings appeared before the emergence of second wave feminism in US and UK. In second wave feminism, the issues of black women were considered divisive for the movement; hence this feminism was also limited to certain sections

of women. Attia's feminist approach like Rokeya Sakhawat Hosain, is also not confined to some particular sections of women, rather it encapsulates the oppressed and marginalized women of every strata of society. She presents minute details of an elite Muslim household in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* in order to show women's oppression at different levels. *Ashiana* is a microcosm of Attia's society. Though Attia migrated to England, her works do not present migratory experiences. Akin to Rokeya Sakhawat Hosain, she also holds the view that mere physical liberation does not end women's marginalistation, rather intellectual liberation is also needed to eliminate women's peripheralisation. Attia Hosain shows the nexus of patriarchy with colonialism and feudalism. In a strict patriarchal-feudal family, Laila's self-realization gives her impetus to protest against andocentric practices. Attia criticizes patriarchal education that makes women intellectually incarcerated. Laila's search for feminine identity is marked by her overt refusal to conform to the patriarchal norms. Characters of Nadira, Sita, and Romana evince subordination of women despite their higher education. Laila's quest for identity reaches its culmination with her marriage to Ameer. She defies the diktats of feudal patriarchy by marrying below the status of her feudal family. Attia posits that imitation of western culture does not bring about any change in the marginalized status of women. Saira and Zahra come out of *purdah* only to conform to the roles of 'new women' incurred by the patriarchy. In her widowhood Saira's religiosity is also at the disposal of patriarchy as in a patriarchal structure, a widow must abandon all luxuries.

Attia's depiction of the under-privileged women bears the imprint of her proximity with the Progressive Writers. The plight of Nandi, Saliman and Hasina exemplifies the worst form of exploitation of women. Similarly Attia's description of courtesans also presents bourgeois exploitation of women. A rebellious streak in Nandi's character makes her remarkable as she does not mutely capitulate to the oppressive patriarchy. She blatantly admits the illegitimacy of her child. Attia shows that in patriarchal structure, marriage is used as an oppressive device. Hasina's rebellion is not successful as she eventually ends up in a brothel.

The gamut of Attia's feminist concerns is very wide. Despite her acknowledgement of western impact on her writings, she is far ahead of her western counterparts in dealing with issues of women. It can be argued that she is one of the forerunners of Third-World Feminism.

The God of Small Things is a reflection of Arundhati Roy's post-colonial feminist approach. In order to show the suppression of women, Roy chooses her community (i.e. Syrian Christians of Kerala). Roy implicates patriarchy and capitalism as agents that marginalize women and nature. Her eco-feminist approach is apparent in her depiction of the exploitation of women and nature under the pseudo-communist regime. Ammu's oppression by the patriarchy and women's collaboration in her marginalization is also similar to the plight of women in the works of both Rokeya and Attia. Ammu defies the patriarchal norms in order to create her identity but is smashed in this encounter with patriarchy. Ammu's rebellion is akin to Hasina's (*The Street of the Moon*) transgression of moral laws.

Both become victims of repressive patriarchal set up. Ammu dies as an outcaste while Hasina ends up in a brothel. Rahel is another character who ignores the patriarchally modified laws by committing incest with her brother Estha. The attempts of the patriarchy to control the lives of women through harsh means often results in degenerate behaviour. The brutal face of patriarchy is exposed by the ruthless murder of Velutha, the untouchable. As far as cultural displacement is concerned Chacko and Pappachi are emblems of cultural displacement. They are disorientated because of their Anglophile attitude. The twins are also in constant search of identity. Estha writes his name 'Estha Unknown' in Wisdom Exercise Book. His encounter with a homosexual evinces the susceptibility of children in an existentialist society. Rahel also shifts from India to US and then again returns to India, in order to search for her identity.

Roy has posited the meaninglessness of marriage. Ammu, Chacko, Pappachi, Mammachi, and Rahel drift into loveless marriages. For them marriage stands for fulfillment of their carnal desires, disjuncted from love. Roy presents that just economic independence of women does not guarantee liberation. Mammachi starts a successful business; still she is subjected to routine beatings of Pappachi. As a post-modern novelist Roy presents the problems of women in a strict patriarchal capitalist society. Unlike Rokeya Sakhawat Hosain, she does not provide any solution. Roy creates existential characters that ceaselessly search for their identity in a Godless universe. Religion is shown as an ideological state apparatus to oppress women and untouchables. Police are shown as repressive state apparatus that brutally kill Velutha

for violating the patriarchal rules and simultaneously insult Ammu in front of her twins. Except Velutha all the male characters are depicted with negative traits. Similar to Rokeya and Attia, Roy also presents a nexus between the patriarchy and colonialism. She tacitly argues that women's marginalization in Kerala is attributed to British colonialism. The description of Meenachal, the river also has feminist implications. The comment that the river "had the power to evoke fear. To change lives" (p.124) implies the matriarchal system in ancient Kerala that has been eliminated after the advent of British colonialism.

Colonial hegemony is apparent; not only through the characters of Chacko and Pappachi but also the pseudo-Marxist government of Kerala practices the colonial policies of exploitation of nature and indigenous culture in the name of industrialization and tourism.

Jhumpa Lahiri's feminist approach is somewhat different from the other three authors. Jhumpa presents women's marginalization in cultural context. Her female characters are not subjected to any economic exploitation by the patriarchy. Most of the women characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's works belong to diasporic communities. In some stories women living in India are presented in order to show the ramifications of patriarchy on the lives of Indian women. The psychological trauma of Mrs. Das in the title story *Interpreter of Maladies* is attributed to Indian patriarchal notion of marriage. Her individuality is snatched by the patriarchal notion of marriage as in her girlhood, her parents only bothered about her marriage, neglecting her emotions. She faces the emotional neglect after her marriage when her husband devotes himself to

his profession. Jhumpa presents two aspects of feminine identity. Mrs. Das' sexual exploit with her husband's Punjabi friend can be construed as her assertion of female individuality, whereas in "Sexy" Miranda retracts from the sexual relationship with Dev in order to maintain her feminine identity, as being a mistress her status will be reduced merely to a sexual object. Bibi Haldar's marginalization is also due to her incapability to conform to the patriarchal niche of an ideal woman. In order to create her feminine identity, she takes the course of deviation from the normal code of behaviour.

In *The Namesake*, character of Ashima Ganguli exemplifies woman's conformist attitude to the patriarchy. She espouses the patriarchal niche of woman as a preserver of indigenous culture. The first generation immigrant women in Jhumpa Lahiri's works are often subjected to patriarchal marginalization. In *Unaccustomed Earth,* Ruma's mother is a first generation woman conforming to the patriarchal niche of an ideal wife. In contrast, Ruma's character is independent and free from the diktats of patriarchy. Her decision of rearing her children is also in defiance of the patriarchal niche of a working wife, bearing two responsibilities of household and job simultaneously.

Lahiri debunks the notion that western culture is universally acceptable and applicable. She shows the incompatibility of western culture viz. the first generation immigrants. Besides, existentialism also impinges the lives of Jhumpa's characters. Moushumi, Gogol and Kaushik are typically existentialists. They are in constant

search of their identity and behave as if they are thrown into an incongruous universe. Their lives are not governed by any divine agency.

In Jhumpa's works feminine identity is affected more than masculine identity by cultural identity because of women's strong cultural ties to the land of their ancestors. The second generation creates a different identity which has to be understood on the basis of their psychological assessment. Second generation immigrants do not deem India as their "home". Their vision of America is contrary to the first generation as the second generation immigrants regard America as their "home". Because of the different notions of "home", a generation gap transpires between the first generation and second generation immigrants. The first generation immigrants become isolated in the alien land and culture.

The four women authors depict the dilemma of belonging. Feminist approach regarding women's marginalization, in cultural terms is similar. Rokeya, Attia, and Arundhati show economic and educational marginalization of women and present the nexus of patriarchy and colonialism, feudalism, as well as capitalism. Jhumpa goes further and presents the divided psyche of women torn between two cultures. She suggests that expatriates have created a third space.

These women authors have delineated a variety of woman. Ranging from Sultana of Rokeya Sakhawat Hosain's *Sultana's Dream* to Hema of Jhumpa Lahiri's *Hema and Kaushik*, these women represent the evolution of womankind. Each author, in her own unique fashion, has attempted to present solutions to women's problems.

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